

WHAT A YEAR! OUR HUGE REVIEW OF 2016



JANUARY 2017  
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# EMPIRE

COVER 1 of 6 JYN ERSO

THE LORD  
OF THE RINGS  
AT 15  
ALL-NEW  
INTERVIEWS

STAR WARS

# ROGUE ONE

WORLD-BEATING ACCESS TO 2016'S MOST DANGEROUS MISSION

**PLUS** WHY LA LA LAND, JACKIE AND FENCES WILL WIN BIG AT THE OSCARS





A GORE VERBINSKI FILM

# A CURE FOR WELLNESS

IN CINEMAS MARCH

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REGENCY ENTERPRISES PRESENTS A BLIND WINK/NEW REGENCY PRODUCTION A GORE VERBINSKI FILM "A CURE FOR WELLNESS" DANE DEHAAN JASON ISAACS MIA GOTH CASTING BY DENISE CHAMIAN, CSA COSTUME DESIGNER JENNY DEAVAN MUSIC BY BENJAMIN WALLFISCH  
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BLIND WINK SCREENPLAY BY JUSTIN HAYTHE DIRECTED BY GORE VERBINSKI ACUREFORWELLNESS.COM #CUREFORWELLNESS ©2016 Screenwell Company, Inc.

# THIS MONTH AT EMPIRE

MANY MOVIES ARE hotly anticipated. It may, in fact, be one of the most over-used phrases in the world of film and entertainment. Often accompanied by its friend, italics, or brother, exclamation mark. But *this* (spot the italics!), this is what it was first articulated — coughed roughly out of someone's throat — for. When *Star Wars* was reborn, it was all about *The Force Awakens*, the first of the new Episodes. Then there was talk of origin movies — complementary outings that told different, smaller, *important* stories. And is there any story really more important than that of the hunt for the Death Star plans? We'll be honest: we have high hopes and even higher expectations for *Rogue One*, and you can find out what we think, pretty much the moment we think it, at [empireonline.com](http://empireonline.com). We couldn't let this event pass without our usual bombastic celebration, though: so we are bringing you six (six) covers: one for each member of the Rebel Alliance. Plus, an exclusive, massive poster. The eagle-eyed (and nimble of fan site) among you will recognise it as an image from an international poster, exclusive to *Empire* and now, to you.

It's undoubtedly a fitting end to a dramatic year. I mean, it's certainly not been boring, right? We've had women in capes, murderers slathered in grease, beasts squeezed in suitcases, busters covered in slime and men straddled by bears. Turn to p84 to see what thrilled, delighted, confounded and tickled us in 2016 (Bowie, Brexit, Prince and President Trump not included), along with our absolute favourite films. The number one might surprise you, but if you've seen it, we know you'll be with us. After all, beautiful, thoughtful, lyrical movies are the ones that often get us through.

See you next year. We're ready for you, 2017. We think.

Terri.



**TERRI WHITE**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



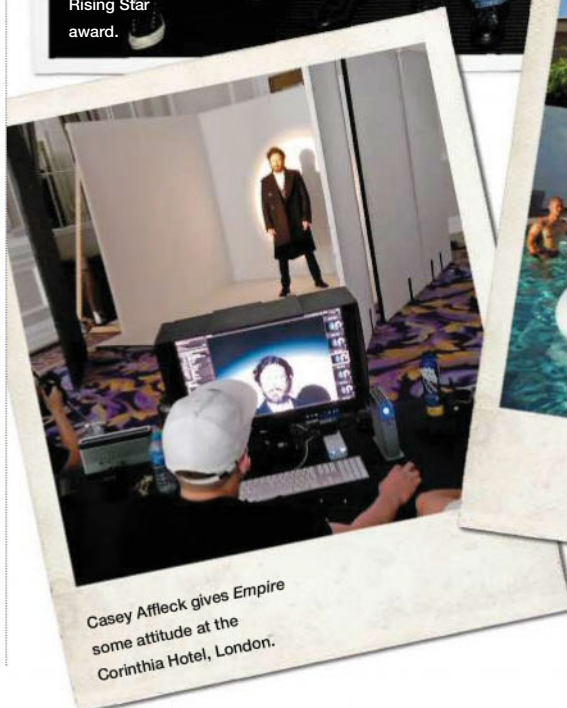
*Stranger Things'* Millie Bobby Brown preps for our shoot at London's Rosewood Hotel in a calm and sensible fashion.



Chris Hewitt helps Team Doctor Strange introduce their weird and wonderful movie at a screening in Leicester Square.



Terri White at BAFTA on the judges panel for the Rising Star award.



Casey Affleck gives *Empire* some attitude at the Corinthia Hotel, London.



Max Landis — atop inflatable — and the crew enjoy the Cali sun during our shoot.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID MAHONEY.  
THANKS TO ART STREIBER





**SHOULDERS CAN  
CARRY ANYTHING**

---

**BUT DANDRUFF**



Visible flakes seen at 2ft with regular use



# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

**58 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY**  
Rejected headlines: The X-Wing-pendables, Rebel Without A Force, Force 10 From Alderaan, and You Don't Have To Be Mads To Work On The Death Star... But It Helps!

**66 MAX LANDIS**  
He may be one of the most divisive men in Hollywood, but he can take comfort in having easily the most colourful hair.

**72 ASSASSIN'S CREED**  
Going by the game, an assassin's belief system, or creed, centres on murder, strenuous exercise and the importance of layering.

**78 MICHAEL FASSBENDER**  
County Kerry's best export, apart from Kerrygold butter. Which, judging by these pictures, Fassbender has never eaten in his life.

**84 REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2016**  
What sort of year has it been? And what's *Empire's* number one film of the year? Spoiler: *Gods Of Egypt* didn't crack the top ten.

**94 THE LORD OF THE RINGS**  
We asked each member of the Fellowship to write nine questions for the next. It's a *Ring* cycle, y'see? Like the Wagnerian opera? But with fewer Valkyries and no incest.

**102 CASEY AFFLECK**  
The younger Batfleck is very good in *Manchester By The Sea*, but imagine how good he could've been in *Wigan On The Water* or *Sheffield By The Stream*.

## PRE.VIEW

**10 LOGAN**  
He's the best there is at what he does — and what he does is get super-old, grey and wrinkly.

**20 SHERLOCK**  
Benedict Cumberbatch in a high collar, defending us all from evil? It'll never catch on.

**22 T2: TRAINSPOTTING**  
Choose a sequel. Choose a reunion. Choose a cattle shed and improvised kilts. Choose cows.

**30 BILLY BOB THORNTON**  
Turns out to scare the *Bad Santa 2* star you need a Komodo dragon stand-up comedian.



Clockwise from here:  
*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*; Natalie Portman is Jackie; *Star Trek Beyond*; Brad Pitt in *Allied*; Michael Fassbender turns killer in *Assassin's Creed*.



## ON.SCREEN

**32 BLEED FOR THIS**  
Could Miles Teller be a contender? Will Aaron Eckhart go the distance?

**45 THE BIRTH OF A NATION**  
Followed by the sequel 'The Post-Election Death Of A Nation'. #satire #amirite?

**46 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM**  
We're still no clearer where the heck they all are.

**54 GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE**  
Better decide now if you're Team Dean, Team Jess or Team Logan because it's about to go down.

## RE.VIEW

**114 STAR TREK BEYOND**  
Computer, engage Viewing Guide mode.

**118 BAMBI**  
The film that has traumatised kids for 74 years gets the Masterpiece treatment.

**128 TO LIVE AND DIE IN LA**  
Your handy cut-out-and-keep map to recreate William Friedkin's LA car chase. NB: do NOT recreate that car chase. It is unsafe.

**134 SUICIDE SQUAD**  
A history of breakout star Harley Quinn on the screen, page and big screen. Enjoy, puddin'!

SPINE LINE ANSWERS ISSUE 330: NEWSSTAND: "WAS THERE NO COMMUNICATION IN THIS CAR? HAD WE DETERIORATED TO THE LEVEL OF DUMB BEASTS?" IS FROM FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS. SUBS: "THIS IS 1-12. I'M IN PURSUIT OF A GREEN THUNDERBIRD. REQUESTING ASSISTANCE" IS FROM THELMA & LOUISE.





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# TALK TO US

## COMMENT OF THE MONTH

### TALE FROM THE CRYPT

For anyone who's curious, here is a photo of Nicolas Cage's pyramid tomb, taken by me on a tour of a New Orleans cemetery, earlier this year. Imagine my surprise when the tour guide asked if anyone knew who it belonged to and a kid of about seven or eight piped up, "Nicolas Cage!"

Fast forward a few months and I'm sitting reading *Empire's* latest issue (330), thoroughly enjoying the Nicolas Cage article 'Cage Uncaged', featuring a story about the man himself taking Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor on a little adventure to see said tomb!

**ASHLEIGH WAGGOTT, VIA EMAIL**

*Good work, Ashleigh. Hopefully your Nic Cage tour of America also included Alcatraz (The Rock), Atlantic City (Snake Eyes), Washington DC (National Treasure) and whichever state Raising Arizona is set in.*



**Picturehouse** *Empire's* star letter wins a Picturehouse Membership, plus one for a friend! Valid for one year at 23 Picturehouse Cinemas across the UK, including the flagship Picturehouse Central in London's West End, each membership comes pre-loaded with four free tickets, and gets you access to priority booking and exclusive discounts on everything in the cinema. When you write to us, please ensure you include your full contact details so we can arrange delivery of your prize.



**TERRY HURLEY**

**"DAMN, YOU'RE OLD! I'VE BEEN READING SINCE MICHAEL KEATON, AS BATMAN, WAS ON THE FRONT COVER.....DAMN, I'M OLD AS WELL!"**

### COMFORTABLY DUMB

I enjoyed Simon Crook's binge report on the *Sharknado* series. But surely the makers of the third instalment set in space missed a glorious opportunity to call it *Sharknado 3: Shark Side Of The Moon*?

**PHIL SAWYER, VIA EMAIL**

*Fun fact: if you start Sharknado 3 at the exact same time as Pink Floyd's The Dark Side Of The Moon, you end up with a headache.*

### GREASY CRUSH

Is it wrong that I found Janet from *The Greasy Strangler* really sexy? She really is a hootie tootie disco cutie.

**DAN CAMERON, NEWBURY**  
*HOOTIE TOOTIE DISCO CUTIE! HOOTIE TOOTIE DISCO CUTIE! HOOTIE TOOTIE DISCO CUTIE! HOOTIE TOOTIE DISCO CUTIE! Ahem. Sorry. What was the question again?*



**HOW CAN WE BE SURE THIS ISN'T ANDY SERKIS PLAYING GARY OLDMAN PLAYING CHURCHILL? #REALQUESTION**

@YAMINTHEIN

### CONTACT US VIA:

**EMPIRE MAGAZINE**, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 189 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, WC2H 8JG / [LETTERS@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM](mailto:LETTERS@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM) / [@EMPIREMAGAZINE](https://www.facebook.com/empiremagazine) / [FB.COM/EMPIREMAGAZINE](https://www.facebook.com/empiremagazine)



# EMPIRE

### EDITORS

**Editor-In-Chief**  
**Terri White**

**Deputy Editor**  
**Jonathan Pile**  
020 7295 6722

### ART

**Creative Director**  
**Chris Lupton**  
020 7859 8642

**Photography Director**  
**Joanna Moran**  
020 7208 3705

**Deputy Art Director**  
**James Ramsay**  
020 7859 6447

**Designer**  
**Olly Gibbs**  
020 7295 8595

**Junior Designer**  
**Ally Wybrew**  
020 7295 8570

**WORDS**  
**Associate Editor (Features)**  
**Nick de Semlyen**  
020 7295 5437

**Associate Editor (Re.View)**  
**Chris Hewitt**  
020 7295 5354

**News Editor**  
**Phil de Semlyen**  
020 7295 5352

**Editor-At-Large**  
**Helen O'Hara**

**COPY**  
**Associate Editor (Production)**  
**Liz Beardsworth**  
020 7295 8543

**ONLINE**  
**Editor-In-Chief (Digital)**  
**James Dyer**  
020 7295 8558

**Junior Online Writer**  
**Emma Thrower**  
020 7295 8503

**Junior Online Writer**  
**John Nugent**  
020 7520 6519

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Simon Braund, Angie Errigo, Ian Freer, Dan Jolin, Will Lawrence, Ian Nathan, Kim Newman, David Parkinson, Nev Pierce, Adam Smith, Damon Wise

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Words:** Simon Crook, Fred Dellar, Mike Diver, Alex Godfrey, Sali Hughes, Max Jolin, Matt Kamen, Andrew Lowry, James Luxford, Dorian Lynskey, Hamish MacBain, Iain Morris, Olly Richards, Anna Smith, Owen Williams, Billy Zane. **Photography:** Charlie Gray, Matt Holyoak, Steve Neaves, John Russo, Art Streiber. **Illustrations:** Andrew Archer, Jacey, Justin Metz, Peter Strain, David Mahoney, Olly Gibbs. **Subbing:** Lucy Williams

### BAUER MEDIA

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Group Managing Director **Rob Munro-Hall**  
Managing Director — Sport & Entertainment **Patrick Horton**  
Business Analyst **Natalie Talbot**  
Managing Editor **Sophie Price**

### MARKETING

Communications Director **Jess Blake** 0207-208 3424  
Direct Marketing Executive **Frederique Campbell** 01733 468896  
Senior Marketing Manager **Natalie Wilkins** 020-7208 3535  
Senior Marketing Manager **Fergus Carroll** 020-7241 8460  
Direct Marketing Executive **Rebecca Lambert** 01733 468804  
Newtrade Marketing Manager, Men's, Film & Music  
**Dave Clark** 020-7520 6465

### PRODUCTION

Print Production Controller **Carl Lawrence** 01733-468858  
Ad Production Controller **Katie Kerry** 01733-468878  
ePublishing Production Director **Alan Kindell** 020-7859 8604

### ADVERTISING

Group MD **Abby Carvosso**  
PA to Group MD **Alison Meadley**  
Head of Magazine Media **Clare Chamberlain**  
Head of Magazine Brands **Rachel Flower**  
Group Commercial Director **Simon Kilby**  
Group Brand Director **Ethan Hall** 020 7295 5477  
Head of Film **Sarah Clarke** 020 7295 3576  
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Regional Sales Manager **Katie Kendall** 020 7295 8560  
Media Planner **Kerry Beasley** 020 7295 5410  
Creative Solutions Director **Rick Williams** 020 7295 6741  
Creative Solutions Art Director **Jonathan Creswell** 020 7295 6786  
Regional Advertising **Katherine Brown** 0161 833 8639  
Head Of Classified **Karen Gardiner** 01733 366434  
Classified Sales Executive **Philip Nessfield** 01733 366370  
Inserts Manager **Simon Buckenham** 020 7075 0812

### SUBSCRIPTIONS, BACK ISSUES AND OVERSEAS SALES

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### INTERNATIONAL & SYNDICATION

International Director **Susan Voss**

### INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS

**Tim Keen** (Australia) [tkeen@bauer-media.com.au](mailto:tkeen@bauer-media.com.au)  
**Khaloud Qaddoura** (Arabia) [khaloud@empire-arabia.com](mailto:khaloud@empire-arabia.com)

### COMPLAINTS

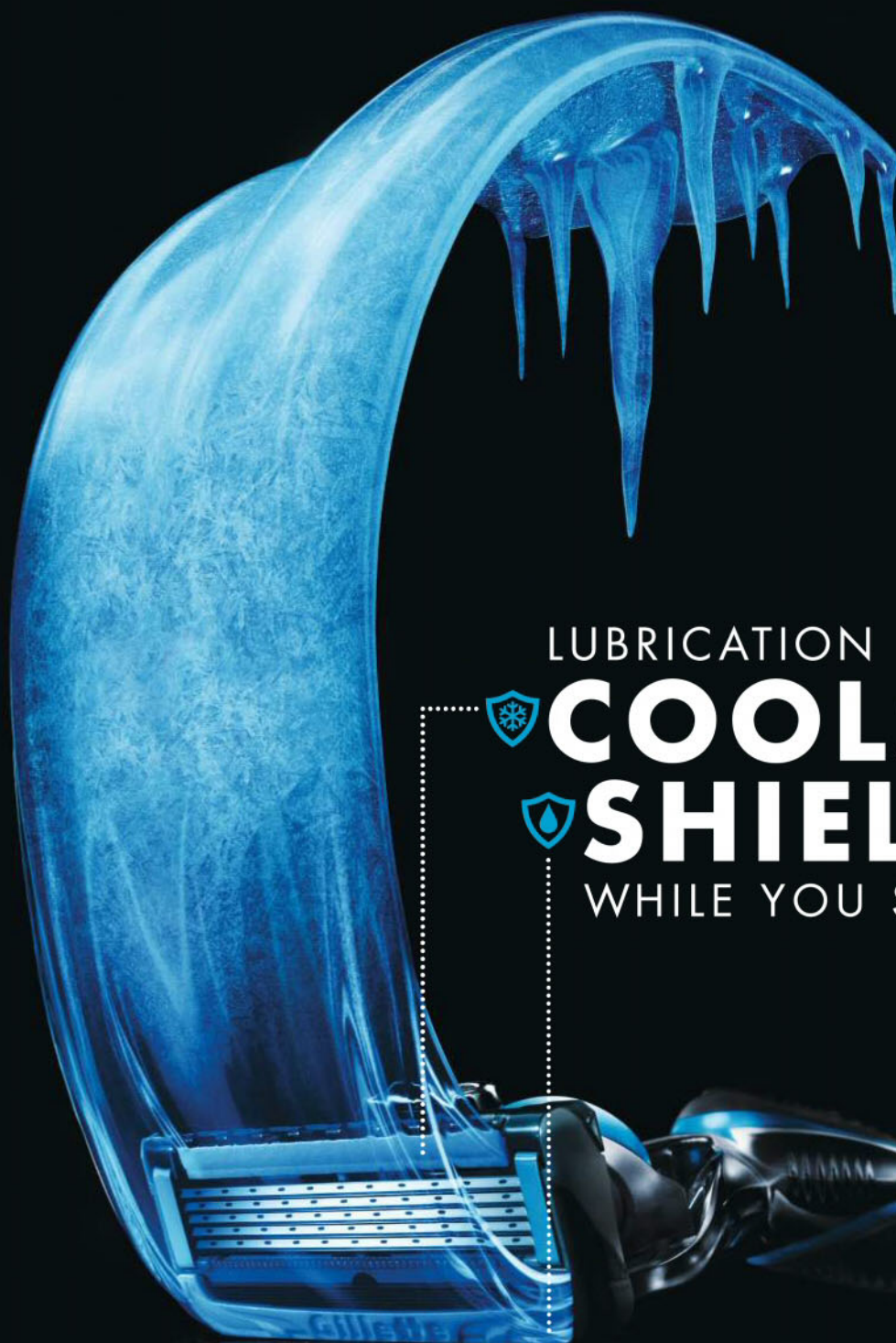
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"I'm not crying. I've just still got pink eye..."





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# PRE.VIEW

PULSE-QUICKENING MOVIE AND TV NEWS

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FIRST LOOK

LOGAN

OUT 3 MARCH 2017

# THROUGH THE FIRE

He's older and more battle-worn, but Wolverine's final outing promises to be his best yet

WORDS HELEN O'HARA

ONE GLANCE AT the greying beard or thick scars, and it's clear director James Mangold and star Hugh Jackman are attempting something very different with *Logan*. For Mangold's second Wolverine film and Jackman's final performance as the character after nine films in 17 years, the pair focus on the fast-healing mutant's vulnerable side. "The goal was to make something human," says Mangold. "We made an effort to scale back on the gloss and greenscreen."

Jackman echoes this. "It's essential you see this as the story of a man who is struggling with mortality and legacy, and whether the world has been better off with him or without him."

Logan has reason to fret. This story is set in a world where no new mutants have been born in over two decades, and he's scraping a living as a limo driver while caring for a fading Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart). But he finds himself charged with a young girl, Laura (Dafne Keane), whose abilities suggest a future for mutants, after all. "If anyone could steal a movie from Hugh Jackman, it would be Dafne," says Stewart. "She carries, all the time, a slight strangeness." Comic fans will know Laura is also the name of Wolverine's female clone X-23, and though Mangold won't confirm it, the slight youngster obviously poses enough of a threat to warrant the cuffs she's wearing here.

Mangold *will* tell us the film is about family. There's a father/son bond now between Logan and Charles, and a father/daughter story between Logan and Laura. And that makes for a more intimate, more serious tone than we've maybe experienced in any big superhero movie yet.

"I could never have gotten this done without Hugh," says Mangold. "You're going to see him doing some of the best work I've ever seen him do."

Wolverine was always the best there is at what he does. If all goes to plan, he's going to get a solo film that reflects that at last.

Patrick Stewart and Hugh Jackman on set, photographed by director James Mangold.







# MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Think updating the musical is a recipe for disaster? *La La Land*'s Ryan Gosling begs to differ

WORDS NEIL ALCOCK

IS THERE A tougher genre to nail in the 21st century than the good old-fashioned Hollywood musical? Winning over modern (and sometimes somewhat cynical) audiences with a movie where people burst into song for no apparent reason requires a balance of tone so delicate, one bum note could sound the death knell for the whole project. But if anyone relishes a challenge it's director Damien Chazelle, and with the Oscar-tipped *La La Land*, he's poised to pull off one of the riskiest moves of his career.

Only too aware of how cringingly terrible all this could have turned out is Chazelle's leading man, Ryan Gosling. "The trickiest part was to not have these characters suddenly become different

people because they were singing," Gosling tells *Empire* after *La La Land*'s rapturous reception at this year's BFI London Film Festival.

The characters, LA-based jazz pianist Seb (Gosling) and aspiring actress/writer Mia (Emma Stone), are struggling, ambitious dreamers who meet in the city of stars, igniting a passionate love affair and a string of song-and-dance routines so ludicrously enjoyable, tickets should come with a happiness warning. Part fantasy, part bittersweet romance, the film dances just inside the fine line separating relatable from ridiculous.

"One way we did that," Gosling explains, "was to introduce comedy so we could have a rat-tat-tat rhythm to the scenes and dialogue, so it didn't feel too naturalistic. And we tried to find a way in the songs to keep the characters as flawed as they were in the scenes you've just seen them in, so often we sang live, or tried to incorporate our limitations as dancers into the choreography."

Deliberately referencing benchmark musicals like *Top Hat*, *Singin' In The Rain* and *The Umbrellas Of Cherbourg*, *La La Land* aims to

simultaneously celebrate and update the genre. "Damien was inspired by those films," says Gosling, "and we drew a lot of inspiration from them." That said, none of those classics feature anyone doing Flock Of Seagulls cosplay while playing a keytar, as happens in a scene destined to rank among Gosling's greatest screen moments. "I don't know if it's a career high or a career low," he laughs.

That scene is one of many that should have audiences surrendering to the film's considerable charms, but the frothy effortlessness with which *La La Land* apparently skips across the screen is the result of enormous hard work on the part of the cast and crew. Chazelle made the decision to present some of the musical numbers in single, fluid takes, which meant every person had to hit every mark, every time. And some of those numbers, like its opening freeway spectacular, are ridiculously complex, shot in real locations and in limited timeframes. And Gosling had to learn to sing, dance, play jazz piano and — of course — master the keytar.

"Trying to fit the keytar into my schedule





**Clockwise from left:**  
 Perfectly pitched:  
 Seb (Ryan Gosling)  
 and Mia (Emma  
 Stone); Love's young  
 dream arm-in-arm in  
 the City Of Angels;  
 Seb tickles the  
 ivories, keytar just out  
 of shot; Stone and  
 Gosling make a song  
 and dance out of it.



of things I had to learn was pretty funny," he recalls. "But we were all being pushed to our limits to see what we were capable of. We worked for three months on, for instance, one number that happens at sunset where it starts as a scene, and it becomes a song, and then it's a dance and then it's a scene again, and it all happens in one take."

You'll know the scene when you see it: shot in LA's Ferndell Park, it's Seb and Mia's Fred-and-Ginger moment. Homaging the flirtatious dance to Irving Berlin's 'Isn't This A Lovely Day (To Be Caught In The Rain)' in *Top Hat*, it's a true crowd-pleaser. Gosling leapt at the chance to put a new spin on something so beloved. "That idea," he says, "just the clever nuance of the way Fred and Ginger's characters were trying to make the best out of a bad situation, we tried to subvert that lyrically in our scene. We tried to make the worst out of a good situation!" So will *La La Land* do for the classic musical what *The Artist* did for the silent movie? Count on it.



LA LA LAND IS IN CINEMAS FROM 13 JANUARY 2017





# YOU DON'T KNOW JACKIE

For director Pablo Larraín, there was only one actress to play the inscrutable Jackie Kennedy

WORDS HELEN O'HARA

WHEN PRODUCER DARREN Aronofsky asked Pablo Larraín, the Chilean director of acclaimed political drama *No*, to make *Jackie*, a study of Jackie Kennedy in the week following the assassination of President Kennedy, the director had one demand: he wanted Natalie Portman. "I immediately said that I wouldn't see anybody other than Natalie playing it," he recalls. "If you go and look at Jackie Kennedy and read the tomes and watch the biopics, you will see that we really know very little about her. That's a combination of two elements. One is that she would protect her privacy, and the other one is she was a very mysterious person. And that mystery is something Natalie has."

Any physical resemblance was secondary to that central fact. Portman is required to hold back enough to match Jackie's reserve, but turn on a dime from almost deranged grief for her husband to the icy control necessary for a woman with the eyes of the world upon her, as she alone becomes responsible for his legacy. "It's a big

part of contemporary media, when somebody is shaping their own public image. This may have happened in the early '60s, but it feels like we are still seeing similar phenomena nowadays. In the case of Jackie, it's someone who was trying to shape and project JFK's legacy, and by doing it she made him a legend and she became an icon — and she was not necessarily aware of that."

The film focuses on the three days between the shooting and funeral, intercut with two interviews Jackie gave before and after the assassination. "I thought it was fascinating to observe someone in that little amount of time. Traditional biopics are very tricky, because for some people it is really impossible to capture them entirely. Sometimes [by focusing on a moment] when a person is facing particularly extreme circumstances, [you] come out with the realities that define them." But for Larraín, his leading lady was the key to navigating Jackie's emotional wilderness. "Natalie has that mystery in her eyes, and that's the reason why there's so many close-ups and tight shots in the film. If you look at Jackie's eyes, it's someone who would be absolutely ungrabbable and undefinable. Natalie's eyes are the doors to this cosmos." Will that enigmatic performance yield a second Oscar for his star? Don't count against it.

JACKIE IS IN CINEMAS FROM 20 JANUARY 2017

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Movies and TV shows in the works



1\_

Disney has added *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* to its slate of live-action remakes. *The Girl On The Train*'s Erin Cressida Wilson will write the script, and new songs are planned.



2\_

*Mr. Robot*'s Rami Malek will play Freddie Mercury in Bryan Singer's biopic of the Queen frontman. The movie, once earmarked for Sacha Baron Cohen, gets underway in 2017.



3\_

Leos Carax has cast Rooney Mara and Adam Driver in English-language musical *Annette*, his follow-up to *Holy Motors*. The pair will play lovers in a movie that will feature music by Sparks.



4\_

Sony's *Sonic The Hedgehog* movie now has *Deadpool*'s Tim Miller producing. Miller will help shape the spiny blue hero's battles with nemesis Doctor Eggman into a *Smurfs*-like franchise.



# hmv presents

# US politics



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FIRST LOOK  
EXCLUSIVE

BEAUTY AND  
THE BEAST

OUT 17 MARCH 2017

# COURTING A CLASSIC

**Bouquets and Beauty and the Beast: can Disney update an Oscar-nominated masterpiece?**

WORDS IAN FREER

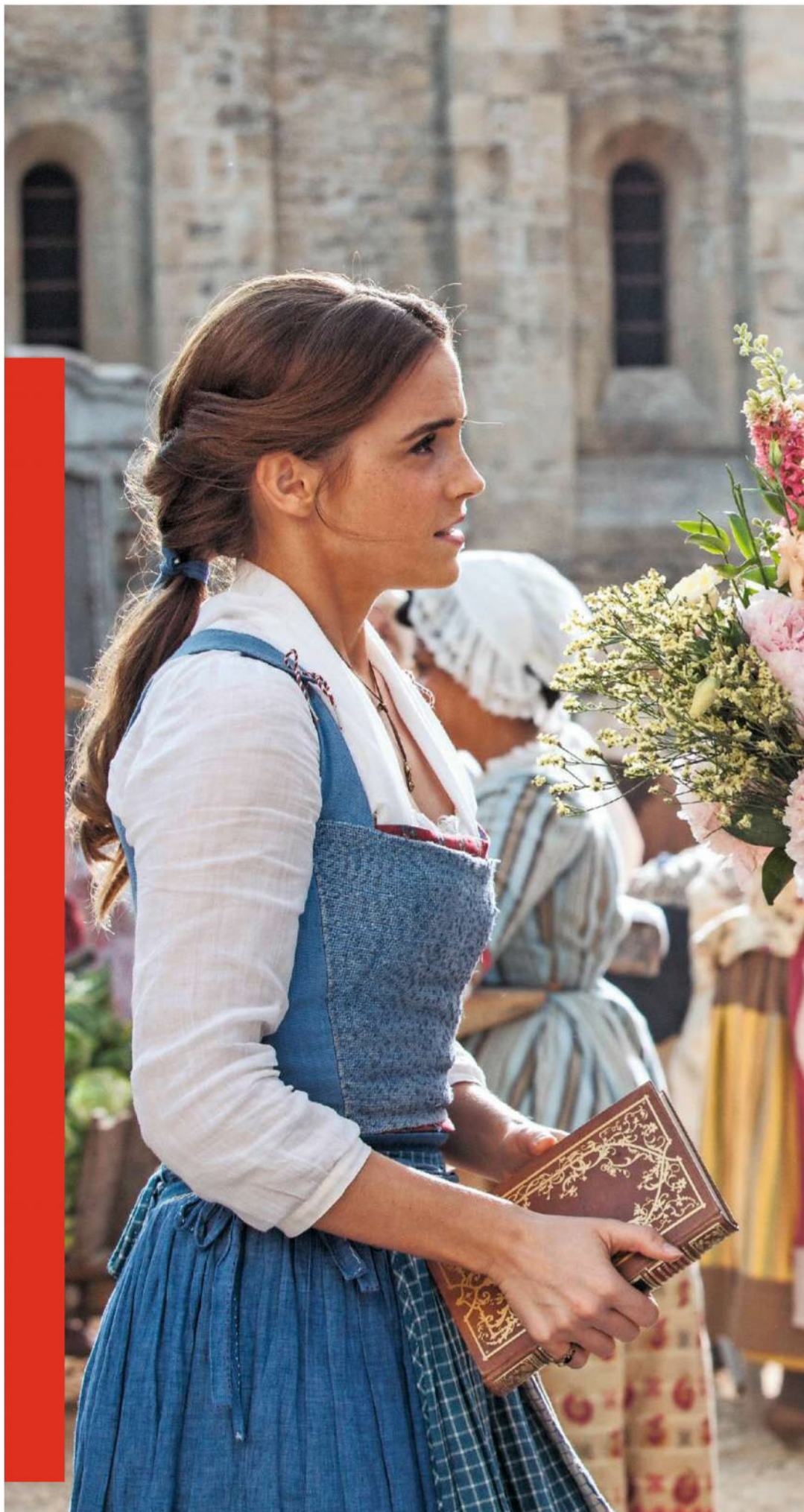
THE ORIGINAL ANIMATED *Beauty And The Beast* in 1991 was the first cartoon ever Oscar-nominated as Best Picture, so the live-action remake from director Bill Condon comes with high expectations and high pressure. But the simple watchword for cast and crew has been to make the story feel relevant and real.

"In animation you can get away with a lot you can't get away with in live action," says producer David Hoberman. "There were several story points we felt we had to deal with: who was Belle's mom and what had happened to her? Who was the Beast and what was his backstory? It's stuff not really discussed in the animated film."

"Belle was one of my idols growing up," says leading lady Emma Watson. "I knew every word to the animation. I was born in Paris like Belle. We both love books, obviously. She is someone who doesn't really feel like she fits in, but she finds her place in the world and uses what makes her different. She was just inspiring to me."

So Watson was particularly determined to do Belle justice, even considering a non-musical Warner Bros. version before Disney's all-singing, all-dancing project came up. She now leads one of the casts of 2017, featuring Dan Stevens (the Beast), Luke Evans (Gaston), and Ewan McGregor (talking candelabra Lumière). And buffoonish villain Gaston, seen here with Belle in the town square of Villeneuve (named for the fairy tale's original author Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve), also has new tones. An ex-soldier living off past glories, he's still comic relief. But Evans' take has other shades, too.

"He gets as dark as any Disney character could possibly get," says Evans. "This is a man who, for the first time in his life, hasn't got what he wanted. He is out to show his anger and make the person responsible pay for it." The tale as old as time, it seems, just got modernised.









Count Olaf (Neil Patrick Harris) tries to entice orphans Violet Baudelaire (Malina Weissman) and Klaus Baudelaire (Louis Hynes) with a cake.

# FAMILY MISFORTUNES

**Unfortunate? Not so much. The most twisted children's books ever get the Netflix treatment**

WORDS OLLY RICHARDS

IF YOU PLAN to watch *Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events* with small children, please check first that there is space to hide behind the sofa. Assuming director Barry Sonnenfeld and star Neil Patrick Harris have done their job, the eight-part Netflix series — all dropping at once in January — will be one of those TV shows that makes people pleasantly shudder at its memory well after they've progressed to adulthood, like *Doctor Who*, *The Box Of Delights* or *The Singing Ringing Tree*.

The novel series by Daniel Handler on which the show is based tells the dark tale of the Baudelaire children, Violet (Malina Weissman), Klaus (Louis Hynes) and baby Sunny, orphaned when their parents are killed in a fire. To make a bad situation worse, they are sent to live with their distant cousin Count Olaf (Harris), who dedicates every minute to elaborate schemes to rob them of their considerable inheritance and, if it should serve his purposes, their lives.

"We establish very early how bad this guy is," says Harris. "He makes the kids cook dinner, and drunkenly berates them while they're doing all they can. Then he slaps Klaus across the face and knocks him to the floor. That's *dark!* And there's no apology for it... That's a lot for a kid-centric show to not explain, but it's important. We have to show why these kids don't leave. It's because they're so scared."

To find the right level of fun/fear, Harris looked back to a film that both delighted and scared him out of his own tiny child mind. "Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*," he says. "I was thinking a lot about those scenes at the end when he takes Charlie and Grandpa Joe into his office, and he screams at Charlie. That, to me, was a little bit of Olaf, just that sense of, 'I will fuckin' snap.' There's something hypnotic about it."

Like the Jim Carrey-starring film adaptation of 2004, however, this isn't *horror*. There is also lightness. It's not for nothing that Sonnenfeld, who so successfully married the kooky and the altogether ooky with *The Addams Family*, is directing. While Olaf is a cruel monster, he is also an idiot, an actor of astonishingly little talent who believes himself a genius and uses absurd disguises to carry out his schemes. "I spent a lot of time in costume acting as Olaf acting as someone else," says



Count Olaf: idiot and monster.

Harris. "That brought its own set of confusions. I, *Neil*, wanted to be good to show I am a man of many characters. But Olaf is *not* a good actor, and I have to respect that."

So be warned: it may not only be the murderous schemes that are horrifying. You may also be subject to some (deliberately) terrifyingly bad acting.

**LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS IS ON NETFLIX FROM 13 JANUARY 2017**



## THE QUOTE QUOTA

The month's most notable  
TV and movie *bon mots*

"IT'S NOT SO BAD HAVING  
A GAY HUSBAND. I'M CERTAINLY  
THE ONLY WOMAN IN HIS LIFE."

ALESSIA (ANDREA RISEBOROUGH) IN  
NOCTURNAL ANIMALS



"THE CORRIDORS HERE ARE REPULSIVE,  
BUT THIS ONE LEADS TO A SHRINE."

WERNER HERZOG IN *LO AND BEHOLD:  
REVERIES OF THE CONNECTED WORLD*



"I SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE ONLY  
RECOGNISING MY LUCKY BREAKS  
AFTER THEY WERE GONE."

RAY KING (J.K. SIMMONS) IN *THE ACCOUNTANT*



"I GUESS IF IT'S FOR YOU  
IT'S A LOVE POEM."

PATERSON (ADAM DRIVER)  
TO HIS WIFE IN *PATERSON*



"IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU."

THE ANCIENT ONE (TILDA SWINTON)  
IN *DOCTOR STRANGE*



Saroo (Dev Patel) on  
his quest. Below:  
Nicole Kidman is  
Saroo's (here played  
by Sunny Pawar)  
adopted mum.

## HEAR ME ROAR

*Lion* star Dev Patel went to  
extremes to portray a lost young  
man uncovering his past

WORDS DAMON WISE

OSCAR SEASON LOVES David and Goliath stories, but debut filmmaker Garth Davis' true-life drama *Lion* depicts a man who faced the greatest odds of all: separated from his poor Indian family at the age of five and adopted by a well-to-do Australian couple, 36-year-old Saroo Brierley (Dev Patel) spent hours of his adult life combing Google Earth for images that would jog his foggy memories of his mother, his brother and the fateful train-ride that ripped them apart. Despite the love of his adopted parents, played by Nicole Kidman and David Wenham, Saroo's past leads him on an epic quest for answers.

That he found his birth village is no secret to anyone familiar with Brierley's book *A Long Way Home*. Instead, *Lion* is the psychological study of a young man coming to terms with his real self. "Identity is a really strong part of this film," says Patel. "That's the one thing I could really relate to." The *Slumdog Millionaire* star endured a gruelling six-hour audition for the role that involved working through the entire script. "At the end of it," recalls Patel, "Garth said, 'Before you go, I'm wondering if you would just scream.' I was like, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'I want you to roar, like a lion. Let go of emotion and completely purge the pain you'd feel in Saroo's situation. You don't *have* to do it.' And I was like, 'Of course I have to!' So I did, and I completely lost my mind. It was jumping in at the deep end."



Primal screams aside, Patel found his generally quiet character a bit of a stretch. "It required an energy shift. I'm a super-hyperactive kind of dude, and the role required a level of stillness. Saroo has this emotional pain, this weight. I spent eight months prepping, and it was all a process of introspection. I travelled around India on trains to get a feel of what it would be like, I wrote diaries, I visited orphanages. Garth would get me to stare in the mirror for an hour. It's amazing what you can see when you stop for a moment and really try to look inside yourself."

Ultimately, the key to the character was Saroo's persistence. "With every click, he was getting closer to his mother," says Patel. What kept him going? "A lot of it was driven by guilt. He was the product of two loving families, and he wasn't ungrateful for that. It was just that while he was living this incredibly privileged life, he couldn't shake the thought that his real mother and his brother could still be scouring the train tracks, day in, day out, looking for him. He just couldn't deal with that — he wanted to reconnect. So I had to have that thought in the back of my mind through every frame of this film." It feels like perfect serendipity that Patel and Saroo, each dogged and determined in their own way, found each other too.

*LION* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 20 JANUARY 2017



ON-SET  
EXCLUSIVE

## SHERLOCK: SERIES 4

AIRS 1 JANUARY 2017

# HOLMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

*Sherlock* is back this New Year — but don't expect merry times just because Moriarty is gone

WORDS OLLY RICHARDS

**SHERLOCK'S** FOURTH SERIES starts with a great big hole in it. A Moriarty-shaped one. Sherlock's (Benedict Cumberbatch) long-time nemesis has definitely gone. "Moriarty is dead," says series co-creator Steven Moffat. "Shot himself through the head. He is dead." But that means Sherlock needs someone new to rattle the walls of his mind palace. On the set of *Sherlock*, on a dark and (artificially) rainy night, that new villain is nowhere in sight. But somewhere lurks Toby Jones' Culverton Smith, who Moffat calls "the darkest villain we've ever written".

In print, Smith was a poisoner who killed his nephew and tried to bump off Holmes. In the TV series he's a quiet character, at least on the surface. "He's very unnerving," says Moffat. "I hope Toby won't mind me saying, but he's a little man, yet he's weirdly a physical threat. He exudes an enormous amount of menace." His co-creator Mark Gatiss adds, "He's also extremely funny. The switch between the two can be terrifying."

The latest three-episode series also introduces a new, very small, member of the cast: a baby for John (Martin Freeman) and Mary Watson (Amanda Abbington). "It inevitably changes the relationship between John and Sherlock," says Freeman. "For John, as you'd imagine, there can be nobody more important than his wife and child." Sherlock's reaction to this new entrant is, says Cumberbatch, "mild indifference".

Though nobody expects this to be the last of Sherlock Holmes, this series will, Cumberbatch says, "deliver an enormous number of pay-offs". And they won't all be happy. Though the new baby brings joy, it won't last. "This is about as tough a journey as John and Sherlock go on," says Moffat. "We're taking them to hell and back this time."



**Top:** Could this canine be Toby the tracker dog from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*?

**Middle left:** Toby Jones as the malevolent Culverton Smith. **Middle right:** Amanda Abbington, Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman with their pint-sized new co-star. **Right:** Mark Gatiss returns as Mycroft. **Far right:** Sherlock, as ever in pensive mood.









FIRST LOOK  
EXCLUSIVE

**T2:  
TRAINSPOTTING**

OUT 27 JANUARY 2017

# LUST FOR LIFE

Why the 20-year wait for *T2*, the sequel to *Trainspotting*, is a blessing in disguise

WORDS ALEX GODFREY

"SO WHAT HAVE you been up to?" asks Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller) when Renton (Ewan McGregor) appears in his pub. "For 20 years."

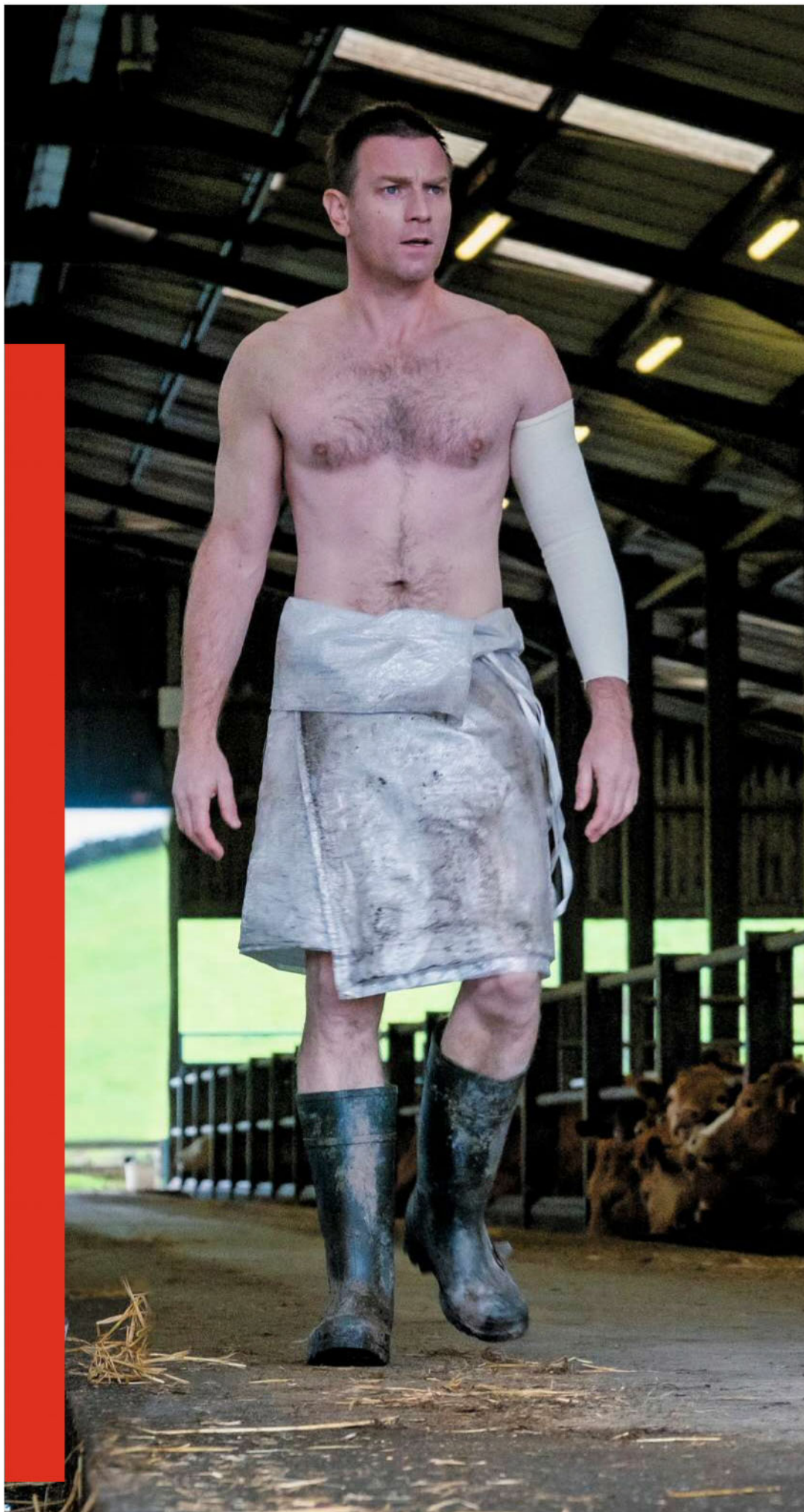
After two decades of anticipation, murmurs and rumours, the *T2: Trainspotting* trailer posed similar questions. When we last left the gang, Kevin McKidd's Tommy was dead, Renton had legged it with a bag of cash, and an enraged Begbie (Robert Carlyle) was busily obliterating a hotel room. So where do we go from here? Surely, after all this time, business as usual is impossible.

Well, it is and it isn't, according to producer Andrew Macdonald. He has returned to the fold along with all of the key cast and crew of 1996's junkie epic *Trainspotting*, including director Danny Boyle, for the very long-awaited sequel. "They're still those characters," Macdonald says of the on-screen mob. "They're still the same people."

Sure enough, aside from some grey hair, bald spots and a smattering of wrinkles, our gang is instantly recognisable. If you've read *Porno*, Irvine Welsh's 2002 sequel to *Trainspotting*, you will have some indication of where the film finds them, but it's not a direct translation. Hodge initially wrote a screenplay inspired by that book, but over the years it evolved into something else entirely.

And all of that time has been a blessing. Having events occur 20 years on, rather than the decade that was initially mooted, has provided richer territory to mine. "It's just more interesting that it's 20 years later," says Macdonald. "In movie terms, ten years earlier felt like a couple of days after."

The trick, he claims, came in referencing the original and reflecting on it without falling into a vat of nostalgia. "The worst thing will be if it feels like a film from 1996 as opposed to a film from 2017." From the adrenaline-fuelled, heart-stopping footage we've seen so far, there's no danger of that.









Denzel Washington directs and stars as Troy Maxson. Below: Viola Davis (who plays Troy's wife Rose) and Washington. They won Tony Awards for Best Actress and Actor in the stage play of *Fences* in 2010.

# MASTERPIECE THEATRE

**Denzel Washington won a Tony for *Fences* on Broadway. Is he about to add an Oscar to the tally?**

WORDS HELEN O'HARA

SIX YEARS AGO, Denzel Washington and his *Fences* co-star, Viola Davis, were basking in Broadway raves. "Lovers don't have to be as young and star-crossed as Romeo and Juliet to generate shiver-making heat and pathos," effused *The New York Times*. Fast forward to today, and Washington is hoping alchemy translates into an equally fêted big-screen version of August Wilson's Pulitzer-winning play.

So far, so good. Its first LA screening, for awards voters, saw Washington's film hailed as an Oscar contender. "I'd had to let it go the day before," its director/star mock-laments to *Empire*. "You're never really finished." In the film, he reprises his Broadway role as embittered

baseball player-turned-garbage man Troy Maxson, with Davis as his long-suffering wife, Rose. It's part of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle ("One of the five great American playwrights," says Washington), ten plays on African-American working-class life. "I've played great parts, great men like Malcolm X or Steve Biko," he enthuses, "but this is the best material I've ever worked on."

Washington first saw *Fences*' original production, with James Earl Jones in the lead, back in the 1980s. But it was 2009 before he read a full script, when producer Scott Rudin sent him Wilson's screenplay version. "I had the idea I was too young. But it said, 'Troy Maxson, age 53.' I was 55 and I was like, 'Hey, wait a minute.'" Instead of making the film he took the role back to Broadway, winning a Tony Award for Best Actor. "I was looking for somebody else to [direct the

film], but I knew the material so I had an idea. It took me, I guess, four years to get the guts."

Washington didn't look hard for his cast either. "I went with the horses that got me there. Viola Davis, Stephen Henderson, Mykelti Williamson, Russell Hornsby all did the 2010 version. We knew the rhythm and we all had great success, so why change it?" Wilson's screenplay did need alteration — the playwright originally adapted it for Jones and Eddie Murphy — but Washington took material from the play to make his tweaks. "If there are 25,000 words in this, 24,900 are August Wilson's."

For Washington, the source material is nothing less than a masterpiece. While he claims he isn't out for personal glory ("I'm here to serve August Wilson, not to toot my own horn," he stresses), he may just add some little gold statuettes to its haul of awards in February.



**FENCES IS IN CINEMAS  
FROM 3 FEBRUARY 2017**

ALAMY



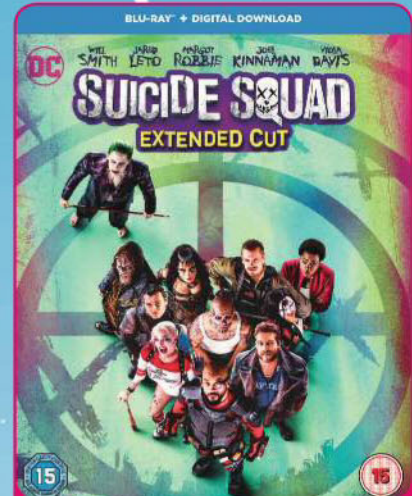
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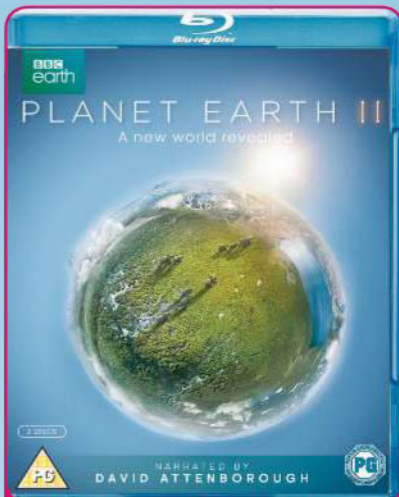
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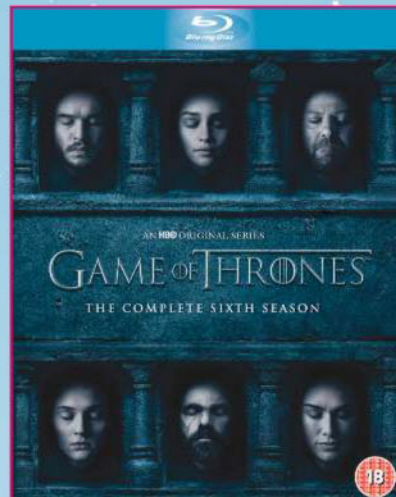
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Selene (Kate Beckinsale) is in no mood to talk. Below: Director Anna Foerster giving direction on set. Bottom: Bloody traffic.

# BACK TO WAR

The fifth *Underworld* has a new director, a new look and a hero who is done holding back

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

KATE BECKINSALE'S SELENE, the vampire-warrior hero of the *Underworld* saga, usually beats her enemies black and blue in a world shaded in the same colours. But *Blood Wars*, the latest instalment in the vampires-versus-werewolves showdown, casts things in a different light.

"In *Blood Wars*, Selene is at a really low ebb," says Beckinsale. "You see a different side to her. [Her one-time mentor] Viktor has emerged as a traitor. [Her lover] Michael has disappeared. She's had a baby that she didn't know about. She's always been really passionate but now, in a way, she doesn't give a shit."

As well as that new attitude for its lead, there's a new director in Anna Foerster. She cut her teeth in visual effects and as a cinematographer on *Independence Day*, *Alien: Resurrection* and *The Day After Tomorrow*, and directed TV's *Outlander* before making her feature debut here. "With *Underworld* you have rules that are very specific to the franchise, but

you can veer off from that," Foerster says. "What I bring to this movie is a defined visual concept and some cool surprises. We have different vampires with different capabilities and backgrounds. I think fans will see a new side to Selene."

The story picks up where 2012's *Underworld: Awakening* left off. Selene is soon separated from the daughter she had only recently rescued, and with returning ally David (Theo Jones) comes up against new and fearsome foes, including Marius (*Outlander*'s Tobias Menzies), a 'Super Lycan' who lusts after the blood of both mother and daughter.

While the previous films saw Selene kick ass in a dark, urban landscape, in *Blood Wars* she ventures outside familiar territory. "Here, we go into different environments and have a different feel and different colours," explains Foerster. "When we go into the north [to visit a Nordic vampire coven] there is a lot of snow, people wear white and furs. That palette was a fun way to push this in another direction." As well as developing her lead character and the visual style, Foerster's also trying to make sure that each fight feels unique, shooting one clash in a single unbroken take, for example. "We need different styles in every action sequence so that it's not just another action film," says Foerster. But she's not trying to



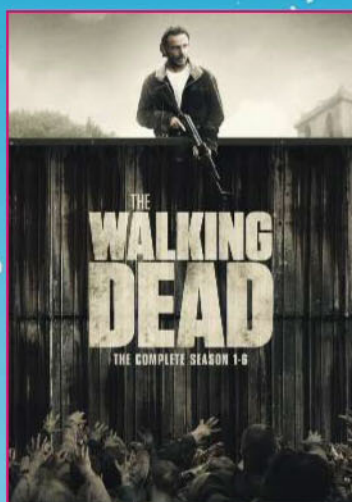
reinvent the wheel. "There are certain things fans expect and we deliver on those."

Most important of all, Selene is looking tougher than ever. "The stakes are very high for Selene in this movie," says Beckinsale. "She's lost everything. She's as close to suicidal as a vampire can get." With nothing to lose, she's at her most dangerous. Marius had better watch his hairy back.

**UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS IS IN CINEMAS FROM 13 JANUARY 2017**



# US TV box sets



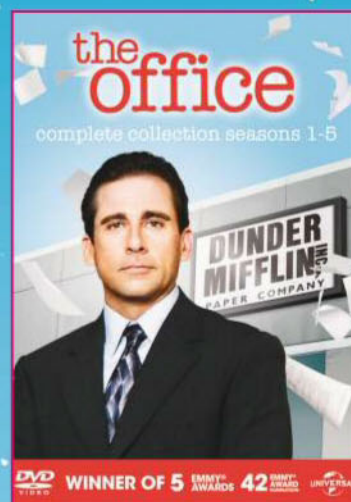
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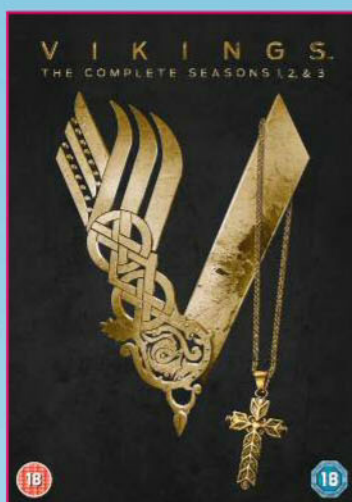
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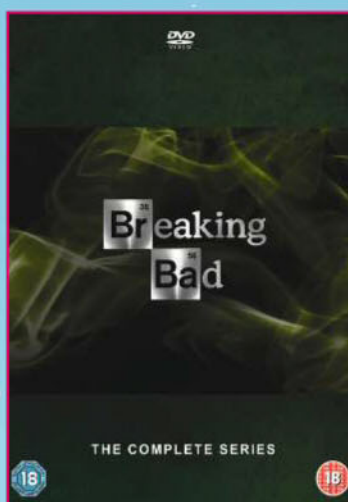
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A photograph of director Stephen Gaghan sitting on a wooden chair in a jungle setting. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and dark pants, looking off to the side. In the background, there is a wooden table with a bottle of beer and some other items. The scene is outdoors with lush green foliage in the background.

FIRST LOOK  
EXCLUSIVE

**GOLD**

OUT 3 FEBRUARY 2017

# SHOCK AND ORE

**Stephen Gaghan's old-fashioned adventure movie *Gold* offered perils both on and off screen**

WORDS PHIL DE SEMLYEN

**MINERS HAVE CANARIES**, but Stephen Gaghan had an even better early-warning system on the arduous jungle set of his new treasure-hunt adventure. "On the first day of filming the water buffalo were miserable," recalls the *Gold* director, "but on the second day they were suddenly really happy, and by the third day I was floating ten feet above our set in a boat."

For three months in remote Thailand, Gaghan's crew and his stars, Matthew McConaughey and Edgar Ramírez, faced monsoon, fetid heat, rockslides, spiders the size of dinner plates and the odd python. Like one of its inspirations, *The Treasure Of Sierra Madre*, *Gold* focuses on the fallout of a gold strike. Loosely riffing on the Bre-X mining scandal of the early '90s, Gaghan's first big-screen effort since *Syriana* spins a more hopeful yarn of the odd-couple pair — McConaughey's schleppy prospector and Ramírez's doughty geologist — who make that life-changing discovery.

The production wasn't all toil, though. Its star embraced the challenge of gaining 45lbs for his role. "If the job means cheeseburgers and a six-pack of Bud before breakfast, then fuck yeah, McConaughey's in," laughs Gaghan. Flood, sweat and beers? No problem. McConaughey's your man.







# HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

BILLY BOB THORNTON

Does *Bad Santa* lap up our leftfield interrogation?

WORDS IAN FREER

## Which character were you in your first school play?

I played the middle Billy goat in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. I think I was a little disappointed; it was interesting enough, [but] I either wanted to be the big Billy goat or the little Billy goat.

## What is your signature dish?

I make a grilled pimento cheese sandwich with cream of tomato soup. It's pretty darned good, but it's the only thing I can make.

## What is your earliest memory?

When I was three, I remember playing a plastic guitar my parents got me and singing the first song I ever wrote, which was called 'Cat Shit On A Rat Box'.

## Have you ever knowingly broken the law?

In West Hollywood one time, I got a pretty high-priced parking ticket because I didn't know you had to turn the wheels to the kerb. I was shocked when I got that. I thought, "Wow, that's weird."

## When in your life have you been the most starstruck?

I got to meet Jimmy Stewart over at Universal Studios when I first got to LA. All I did was shake his hand, look at the ground and walk

away. That's probably the only time I got really nervous meeting somebody.

## What scares you?

Komodo dragons. I just figure if something is a dinosaur, they are not supposed to be here. I don't understand it. Also, stand-up comedy. I have some stand-up comic friends. It would scare me to do it, but it also scares me for them because they are looking for a specific result immediately — laughter. If people don't laugh, it gets very uncomfortable. It's not like I'm going to run into a Komodo dragon in Beverly Hills. And it's not like I am going to be forced into doing stand-up comedy. But both are scary to me.

## How much is a pint of milk?

I'm one of those people who doesn't look at the bill. We order our groceries from a delivery [service] so I couldn't tell you. Maybe it's \$3 or something? I don't know.

## What is the worst smell in the world?

The tour bus at the end of the tour.

## What's the strangest place you've ever thrown up?

Underwater. I was on a houseboat with some friends as a teenager. We were with these girls

and I thought I was going to get laid but got so drunk I couldn't perform. I was lying on my stomach and just started throwing up over the dock. I remember my head going under the water. When I threw up, I sucked water up and things got even worse. When I came back in I was sober enough to be able to do it, but what girl's going to want to do it with a guy with wet hair and puke all over him?

## On a scale of one to ten, how hairy is your arse?

Oh gosh, maybe a one. I'm not an especially hairy person.

## When was the last time you walked out of a movie?

I have never walked out of a movie, except for *Exorcist II: The Heretic*. I was on a road trip in Virginia with my buddy and we only left because we were both going to sleep all the time. I've never understood walking out of movies. I've especially never understood storming out of movies. I read a review recently where it said, "The real crime in this movie..." It's like, "Are you shitting me?" People need to relax about movies a little bit, ya know?

**BAD SANTA 2 IS IN CINEMAS FROM 25 NOVEMBER**







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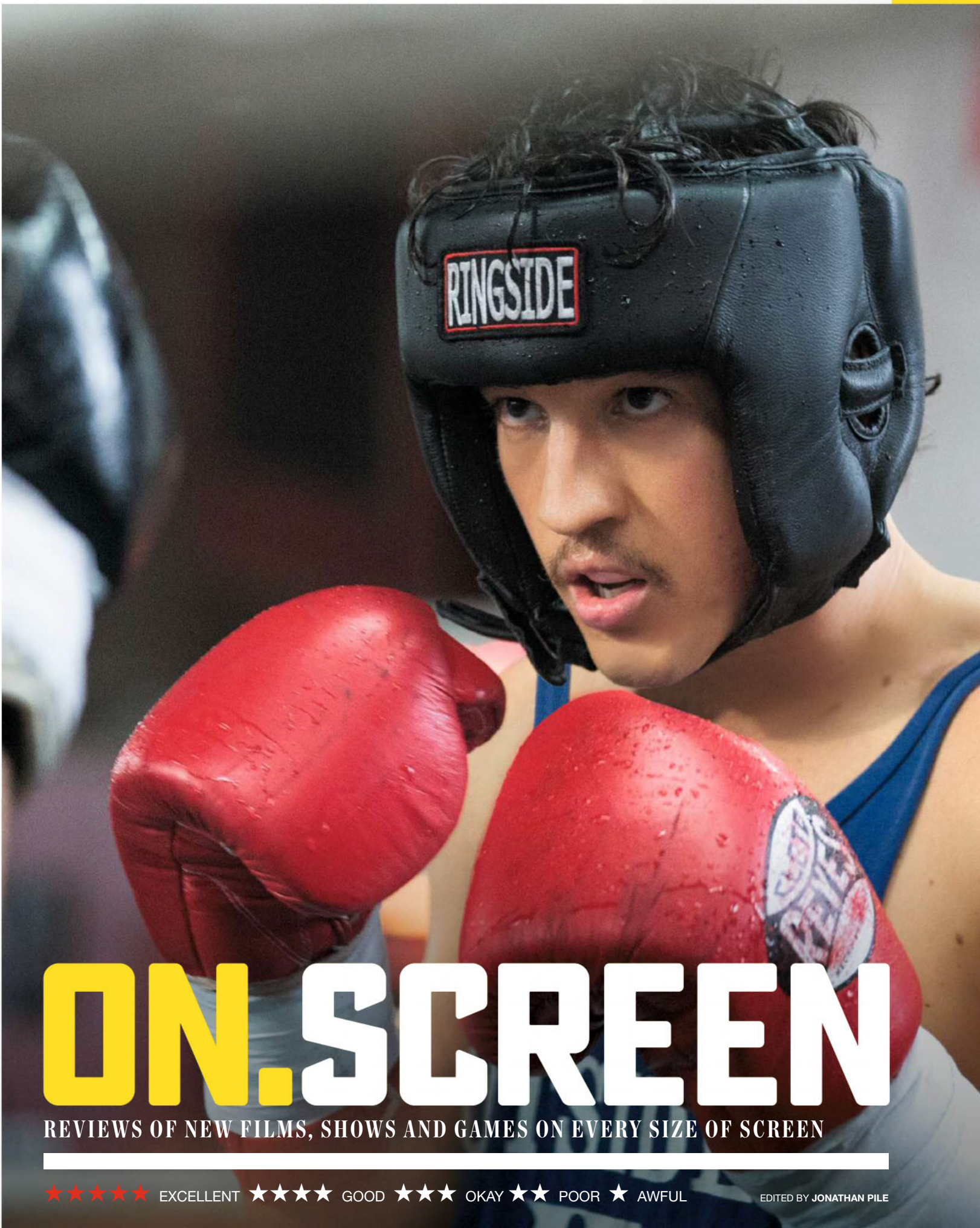
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# ON.SCREEN

REVIEWS OF NEW FILMS, SHOWS AND GAMES ON EVERY SIZE OF SCREEN

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ OKAY ★★ POOR ★ AWFUL

EDITED BY JONATHAN PILE



## CINEMA

## BLEED FOR THIS



OUT 2 DECEMBER  
CERT 15 / 117 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Ben Younger

**CAST** Miles Teller, Aaron Eckhart, Ciarán Hinds, Ted Levine, Katey Sagal

**PLOT** The true story of Vinny Pazienza (Teller), a junior welterweight boxer who improbably won the junior middleweight championship after his trainer Kevin Rooney (Eckhart) moved him up two weight classes... Then even more improbably defended his belt after breaking his neck.

## ORIGINALITY NEED NOT be

a prerequisite for enjoyment. If it were, the sports movie genre would never find an audience. The boxing movie, especially. And sure enough, *Bleed For This*, the latest member of the sweat-flinging subgenre, is steeped in familiarity.

In Miles Teller's Vinny 'Paz' Pazienza, it has at its core an amiable pugilist with strong echoes of Rocky Balboa, portrayed by an actor with all the physical dedication of De Niro in *Raging Bull*. In its portrayal of Vinny's overbearing family, it brings vivid flashbacks of David O. Russell's *The Fighter*, though this clan's New York Italian rather than Boston Irish. In its unflinching presentation of the sport's physical toll, it circles *Million Dollar Baby*. It has a rise-fall-return structure, mouthy weigh-ins, rock-pumped training montages in grimy-walled gyms, ring-corner pep-talks, bruises, blood and buckets of perspiration. And, unless you're truly immune to the many charms of the big-screen boxer, it's gripping entertainment.

It hardly hurts that Vinny Paz's true-life story is so remarkable. Yet writer-director Ben Younger, finally getting back to the form he displayed with his 2000 debut *Boiler Room*, assumes minimal viewer knowledge of the junior middleweight champ, and lays it out straight and chronological. It's a smart strategy, though one which admittedly gives the film's big dramatic beats greater impact on those who come in with the least knowledge of its subject. Early on, *Bleed For This* is a simple tale of a stubborn non-contender who refuses to throw in the towel. With his grizzled manager (Levine) determined to ditch him, Vinny hooks up with unconventional trainer Kevin Rooney — played by a paunchy, balding Aaron Eckhart, who looks very Christian-Bale-in-*American Hustle*. Their first encounter is a true meeting of the underdogs — the loser fighter and his loser mentor. Rooney's glory days coaching Mike Tyson are a distant memory made only more unfocused through the trainer's booze-induced

haze. "You smell like liquor," says Vinny. "You smell like Rhode Island," the surly coach shoots back. Teller and Eckhart form a likeable double act, and present a convincing friendship. An entire film could have been made about how grudging respect grows between them, Rooney's bold tactics vibing perfectly with his charge's high-risk, 'all in, all the time' attitude. The written-off 'Pazmanian Devil' roars back into the ring, punches way above his original weight, defies all the naysayers and wins the championship.

But that's only half the story.

At the movie's mid-point, there's a shockingly framed head-on car collision, and Vinny's out for the count with a broken neck. Then an entirely new, and exquisitely agonising comeback begins. Ignoring all medical advice, he has a head-clamping 'halo' brace literally screwed into his skull and resolves to retrain — despite being told it's not certain if he'll ever walk again. This means a lot of running time is spent out of the ring for a boxing pic. For a while, Vinny's greatest battles are with the grinding boredom of recovery and, an even worse foe, being treated like he is truly finished. "I'm getting pretty sick of people talking like I'm dead," he complains. At this point, *Bleed For This* could have slipped into the mire of over-sentimentalised daytime-soapish drama. But Teller's an actor with enough magnetism to keep you engaged. And, though we're more used to seeing him play geeky, softer guys, Younger's pulled off a casting coup with an actor whose already damaged features (the broken nose, those little scars) are put to maximal use. Every face tells a story, and Teller's feels perfectly matched with Vinny's. It will make you wince, tense up and wonder how damn excruciating it must have been to wear a medical device which looks more like a medieval torture implement. At times — such as during the squirmy close-ups of those screws puncturing Vinny's skull — you wonder if Younger was taking notes from David Cronenberg.

Even if you don't already know the full Paz narrative, you can guess where this is going. But so what? Younger's script is like a flicked towel in a locker room and his attention to little details gives the film a naturalistic warmth. Did we need to know Vinny's brother-in-law has a yen for ceramic elephants? No, but the movie's all the richer for it. Younger even allows a little cliché-undercutting humour, such as a glorious pratfall by one of Vinny's girlfriends during a slo-mo corridor stride.

The real victor here, though, is Teller. Buffed up way beyond his nerdier turn in *Whiplash*, he sells the commitment of an obsessive talent just as hard, and just as impressively. **DAN JOLIN**

**VERDICT** It may be predictable, but *Bleed For This* still grabs with its astonishing against-all-odds true story, and its belter of a central performance from Miles Teller.





To be honest, she'd been hoping for the full-works cakes and Prosecco job.

## CINEMA

## ALLIED



OUT 25 NOVEMBER  
CERT 15 / 124 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Robert Zemeckis

**CAST** Brad Pitt, Marion Cotillard, Jared Harris

**PLOT** Casablanca, 1942. Parachuted into enemy territory, Max Vatan (Pitt) embarks on a fateful mission with beautiful French agent Marianne Beausejour (Cotillard). The pair must pretend to be husband and wife, a façade that soon gives way to something deeper — and more dangerous.

**FANS OF BRAD** Pitt eating things in movies, rest easy: your man tucks into an entire Moroccan tagine in Robert Zemeckis' stolid, old-fashioned spy thriller. It's one of the few reliable things in a curiously underpowered performance from an actor who should, on paper, lend exactly the kind of star wattage this tale of double-crosses and derring-do needs to spark into life.

Posing as a Parisian mining executive, Pitt's Canadian spy Max Vatan is sent on a deadly mission behind enemy lines. Dropped into the

desert outside Casablanca, he's soon in a *Gilda*-style nightclub finding the other half of his cover story: a glamorous woman wearing hummingbirds on her blouse who'll pose as his wife. It's an apt motif, for the woman — Marion Cotillard's Free French agent — is a free-spirited and captivating beauty. She's soon putting the '*fatale*' into *femme* with some dead-eyed Sten gun practice, working on his Parisian accent ("Québécois!" she sniffs, although "*Allo 'Allo!*" is nearer the mark), and giving him lectures on the local mores. Moroccan men, we learn, always go to the roof after making love to their wives. To maintain their charade, Pitt is regularly sleeping under the stars.

While Cotillard is game as the steely-yet-vivacious Bonnie to Pitt's more introspective Clyde, the only sparks that fly between them come during a slickly executed assassination sequence that recalls the climax of *Inglourious Basterds*. Unlike *Allied*'s obvious romantic touchpoints, from *Casablanca* to *Notorious*, this central pairing is hardly woozy with chemistry. Cotillard's simmering intensity and Pitt's more laconic charms rarely feel like natural bedfellows.

Of course, though, it's into bed they tumble in a second act that relocates them to Blitz-torn London and throws a Nazi agent into the mix. Here, Steven Knight's (*Peaky Blinders*) script seems on a surer footing. The shadow of those

great Hollywood classics gives way to a brisk spy-chase flick straight from the pages of a Jack Higgins or Ken Follett thriller as Pitt's paymasters pick up the scent of Nazi espionage and the pair are jolted from their domestic idyll. There's a marvellously nasty cameo by Simon McBurney as an anonymous intelligence wonk from the feared V Section. He does everything except hiss and shoot flames as he grills Vatan on the mole.

Where *Allied* works best is in testing the strength of its central relationship as it comes under greater duress. Can the two lovers ever entirely trust each other knowing they both lie for a living? Will the brutal facts of war prise apart their bonds of loyalty? And can they keep their chickens alive as the Luftwaffe bombs rain down?

Unlike his most recent period piece, high-wire thriller *The Walk*, Zemeckis keeps most of his technological toys in the box for this one. A more classical piece of filmmaking, shorn of bells and whistles, its show-stopping moment comes with a whirling camera move around a car caught in a desert sandstorm. A reminder of its maker's formidable skills, it's a rare bravura moment in a more workmanlike thriller. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

**VERDICT** Zemeckis' old-school romance has its moments and Cotillard gives it her all, but it lacks the zip and chemistry to truly spark.



15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY RELEASE – EXCLUSIVE 4K RESTORATION

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## CINEMA

# SULLY: MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON

★★★★

OUT 2 DECEMBER  
CERT 12A / 96 MINS

DIRECTOR Clint Eastwood

CAST Tom Hanks, Aaron Eckhart, Laura Linney, Anna Gunn

**PLOT** When his plane suffers catastrophic damage over New York, Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger (Hanks) has to make a split-second choice about how to safely bring his craft down. His choice saves everyone on board, but his superiors question whether it was the right one.

EVERY FEW YEARS, somebody will make the argument that movie stars have become redundant, because it's brands and spectacle that sell now. While it's true you no longer need a big name above the title as long as you have a superhero's name in the title, there are still times when only a movie star will do. *Sully: Miracle On The Hudson* is one such time. And the only movie star who will do for it is Tom Hanks. Give his role to an actor without his great reserves of charisma and cosy natural warmth and you've got a rather pedestrian true-life procedural drama. Add Hanks and you've got an extra layer of human frailty, a flash of steel, a touch of *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*-esque facing down the establishment and over \$100 million at the US box office.

The film opens with a scene that is at best confronting, at worst exploitative and unearned. A plane, piloted by Captain Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger (Hanks), gets into difficulty over New York and goes down in flames in the city's streets. That didn't happen — it's a dream sequence, from which Sully wakes sweating — but director Clint Eastwood is asking his audience to remember 9/11 and suggesting this could have been similar. This is maybe a step too far into territory that should only be touched with very sure feet.

What actually happened was that on 15 January 2009, Sullenberger, a pilot with three decades of experience, was flying a plane out of New York's LaGuardia airport. Barely off the ground, he flew into a flock of birds, which were sucked into both engines, destroying them. With no power, he had the choice to glide into one of two nearby airports, potentially crashing into Manhattan, or to land in the Hudson River, which risked killing everyone on board. He chose the latter. Astonishingly, everyone on board survived. Sully was hailed a hero. The movie has it he was then investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board, who were determined he had acted recklessly.

It's at this point that the film's premise becomes confused. You have Hank's Sullenberger, a man who has no desire to be famous, just wants to do his job and isn't prepared for the role of hero. Hanks plays this journey beautifully, his words saying little but his face conveying the struggle of someone who believes he did the right thing, but wonders if, just maybe, he didn't and isn't worth this adoration. This, however, doesn't present much tension — everyone survived, so how can any outcome make Sully the bad guy? — so Eastwood tries to amp up the drama with safety investigators manipulating facts to discredit him and the media making his life unbearable by trying to celebrate him. While the investigation actually happened, it doesn't convince that he would immediately be treated with suspicion.

With nowhere obvious for the story to go, Eastwood keeps circling back to recreating the events of the crash, which are so well put together they may induce motion-sickness. In fact, these few minutes between engine failure and crash hold the entirety of Sullenberger's story. He's an ordinary man who was briefly extraordinary. That leaves much of the film grounded, but it still has a much better than ordinary performance from Hanks to lift it. **OLLY RICHARDS**

**VERDICT** Eastwood's message that no good deed goes unpunished feels misplaced, but for the crash sequences and Hanks' turn it's worthwhile. But for goodness' sake, don't watch it on a plane.



## THE COMING WAR ON CHINA

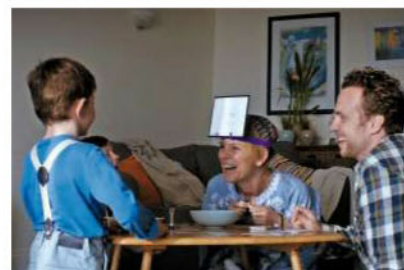
★★★★

OUT 5 DECEMBER / CERT TBC / 111 MINS

DIRECTOR John Pilger

CAST John Pilger

A DOCUMENTARY THAT postulates World War III is on its way, with the US and China being the major players, then searches for potential flashpoints as it examines the many reasons that led us here — events dating back for more than a century. And it places the blame firmly at America's feet, detailing a secret history of human experimentation and both military and economic aggression that's seen China having to resort to increasing its armed presence in the South Pacific. It labours its point by the end ('... and then America did this, and this, and this...'), but to his credit, political journalist and commentator John Pilger presents a fascinating and terrifying look at the state of the modern world. **JP**



## MUM'S LIST

★★★★

OUT 25 NOVEMBER / CERT TBC / 104 MINS

DIRECTOR Niall Johnson

CAST Rafe Spall, Emilia Fox, Elaine Cassidy, William Stagg

ADAPTED FROM ST JOHN Greene's bestseller, this is a touching account of a dying Somerset mother's bid to remain close to her young sons by leaving her devoted husband a wishlist to follow in her memory. Shuffling events to trace the couple's relationship from a roller-skating rink to a cancer ward, Niall Johnson's screenplay deftly conveys Rafe Spall's conflicted emotions as he tries to remain strong for both Emilia Fox and their two boys. But, while the romantic, medical and paternal aspects are delicately handled, the inspirational tone is frequently undermined by the glutinously insistent score and song-track that are wholly out of keeping with the otherwise laudable dramatic restraint. **DP**





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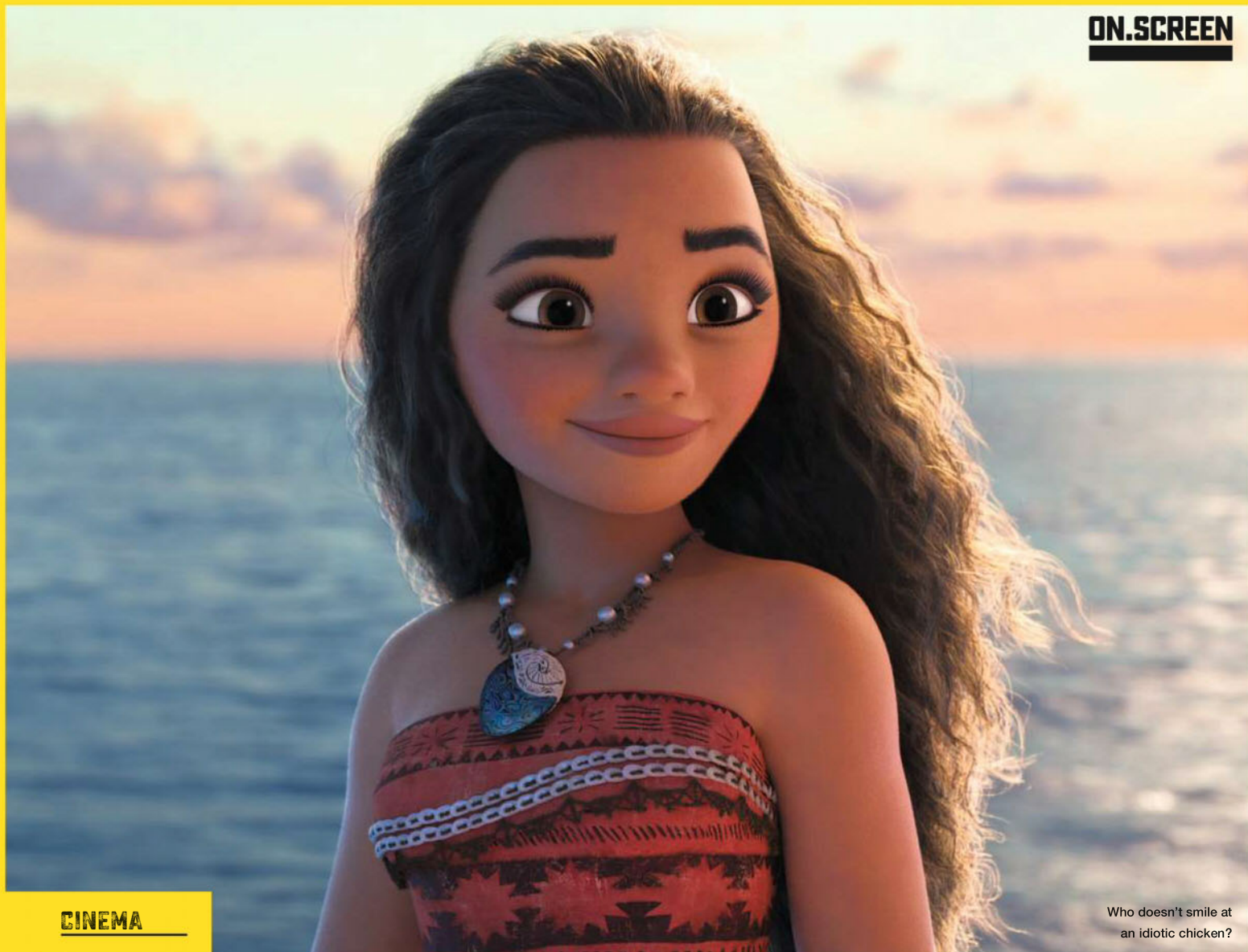
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Who doesn't smile at an idiotic chicken?

## CINEMA

## MOANA



OUT 2 DECEMBER  
CERT TBC / 103 MINS

**DIRECTORS** Ron Clements, John Musker

**CAST (VOICES)** Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho, Temuera Morrison, Nicole Scherzinger

**PLOT** On Motunui, a small island in Polynesia, young Moana (Cravalho) is being raised to lead but dreams of nautical adventure instead. Impending disaster causes her to finally head out past the reef, teaming up with a braggart demigod named Maui (Johnson) on a mission involving a magical stone.

**BACK IN 1963**, Disney had huge success with a project tapping into Polynesian culture. It wasn't a movie, but a theme-park attraction called the Enchanted Tiki Room stuffed with singing animatronic birds. Amazingly, it's taken 50 years for the studio to make a feature film based around the lore of the Pacific Islands. The good news is, *Moana* was worth the wait. The bad news is, it doesn't have a single singing bird, although there is a scene-stealingly idiotic chicken called Hei Hei.

Originally it looked like the movie was going to be called *Maui*: the name of the tattooed demigod voiced by Dwayne Johnson. It was his folkloric exploits that first grabbed the attention of directors Ron Clements and John Musker. Then they decided to make the lead character a 16-year-old girl instead, creating a bickering, *True Grit*-esque dynamic between her and Maui as they navigate cyan-blue seas. It turned out to be an inspired move: the relationship is relentlessly entertaining. "I am not a princess," Moana insists. "If you wear a dress and you have an animal sidekick, you're a princess," fires back Maui. She does and she has, but there's no love interest and she is every bit the equal to her big-chested, big-talking, curiously nipple-free companion. Like *Frozen*, it's a progressive Disney movie that nimbly dodges outdated tropes.

Also like *Frozen*, it's got some mighty music, thanks in no small measure to the involvement of Broadway smash Lin-Manuel Miranda. There are some parallels between this and the musical that made him famous: both *Moana* and *Hamilton* involve someone leaving a tropical island to achieve greatness (you could call this *Clamilton*), and both feature earworming anthems of empowerment (*We Know The Way* is the one you'll be humming two days later). It's also hard to resist Johnson singing Miranda's

*You're Welcome*: an ode to egotism that is simultaneously a perfect storm of delightfulness.

Story-wise *Moana* doesn't do anything radical. But visually it's always finding new riffs, whether with the moving tattoo on Maui's pec, a kind of inky Jiminy Cricket, or the sea itself, which transforms into an *Abyss*-style sentient wave to interact with our heroes. There's a gloriously surreal battle with the Kakamora (think the Smokers from *Waterworld*, if Dennis Hopper were a coconut). And perhaps most fun of all is the sequence in which Musker and Clements, the duo who brought us *The Little Mermaid*, take us back under the sea for a confrontation with a glammed-up hermit crab (Jemaine Clement), a foray into a realm of fluoro nightmares.

There's the odd dull stretch and dud line: "When you have a bird to write with, it's called tweeting," is unlikely to age well. It turns out, though, that Polynesian mythology and the House Of Mouse go together very well indeed. Between *Moana* and *Zootopia*, it's been a banner year for Disney Animation: Pixar, watch your back. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

**VERDICT** A crowd-pleasing oceanic musical with big tunes and beguiling characters, *Moana* is likely to thwack a big smile on your face. And did we mention the idiotic chicken?





She couldn't get enough "knock knock" jokes.

## CINEMA

## A UNITED KINGDOM



OUT 25 NOVEMBER  
CERT 12A / 111 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Amma Asante

**CAST** David Oyelowo, Rosamund Pike, Jack Davenport, Vusi Kunene, Tom Felton

**PLOT** Late 1940s London, and law student Seretse Khama (Oyelowo) falls for office worker Ruth (Pike). But he is heir to the leadership of the Bamangwato people, and their union draws the ire of both them and the British Empire.

**AMMA ASANTE'S LAST** film, 2013's *Belle*, emphasised the link between the personal and political in the story of a slave's daughter who helped end slavery. *A United Kingdom* manages a similar feat, offering a touching romance then hitting the audience with the dehumanising evils of colonialism. Both stories would seem implausible if they weren't fact-based but, if anything, this one struggles to cram in the dramatic ups and downs of its central romance.

We open in London in the late 1940s, with

Ruth Williams (Pike) dragged to a missionary dance by her sister Muriel (Laura Carmichael). There, she is instantly struck by Seretse Khama (Oyelowo), the future leader of Bechuanaland (modern-day Botswana), who's holding forth on colonial politics. They dance together — and then, daringly, keep meeting. Soon, with his return to Africa imminent, he proposes and she accepts. It's a dizzying, quickly sketched courtship, but Asante establishes the pair's commitment and courage.

The obstacles to the match soon mount. Her father (Nicholas Lyndhurst) disowns her, and neighbours assault the couple in the street. But far more dangerous are the colonial authorities, led by Alistair Canning (Davenport, sneering for England), terrified of offending apartheid South Africa by installing a mixed-race couple in power on their border. They try to break the match, or drive the couple into exile, or persuade Seretse's equally disapproving uncle and regent Tshekedi Khama (Kunene) into a conflict that would justify direct rule from London.

Through illness, exile and unrelenting pressure, the couple's commitment to each other is the only constant — and there the performances of Pike and Oyelowo, devoted and utterly stoic, are essential as the focus shifts, with just a slight wobble, from love story to geopolitical scrap.

Asante still finds personal moments amid

the political storms and emphasises Ruth's less headline-grabbing struggles in her new home. She sensitively sketches the understandable reservations of African women faced with this white intruder, who self-consciously practises waving like the Queen as she tries to figure out her role, and makes a character of the *kgotlas*, the popular gatherings to affirm or reject Seretse's place as chief of his people. And she has empathy for the colonial administrators too: however unjust their actions, they're convinced of their own righteousness. But if there's a criticism to be made of the film's second half, it's in the (sadly factual) distance between the leads.

The film ends, if anything, a touch too early, before Botswanan independence is secured and before the couple really became a shining contrast to the pariah state of apartheid South Africa. But as an example of uncommon love and humanity defeating one part of a grotesque system, it's quietly inspiring. There may be a hint of rose-tinting to the film's depiction of Ruth and Seretse, but then, that could just be the African sun shining on a story about hope. **HELEN O'HARA**

**VERDICT** It glides romantically along on the surface while political turmoil boils away underneath. Its plea for tolerance isn't subtle, but it's a story that deserves to be told.

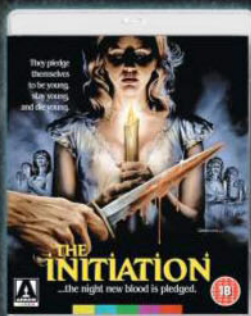


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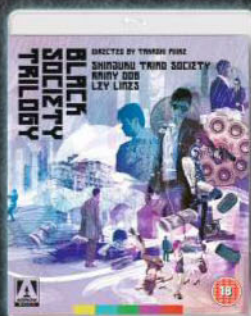
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## CINEMA

## CHI-RAQ

★★★★★

OUT 2 DECEMBER  
CERT 15 / 127 MINS

DIRECTOR Spike Lee

CAST Nick Cannon, Teyonah Parris,  
Wesley Snipes

**PLOT** The streets of Chicago are blighted by gang war and death. With the police unable to control the violence and people being killed every day, the women of the community decide there's only one way to end the war: until the men agree to put down their guns, the women won't be putting out.

**FOR THREE DECADES** Spike Lee has made films that shout against the imbalances and injustices inherent in being black in America. He was doing it when very few others were, always passionately, sometimes electrifyingly, occasionally incoherently. When you've been part of an argument for that long, your voice can become just part of the growing roar, losing distinction as others rise to join it. With *Chi-Raq*, by some distance his most exciting work in years, Lee shows he still has plenty to say and still has ways, as a filmmaker, to surprise, perhaps invigorated by a world that has presented whole new horrors to talk about,

Surprise one: *Chi-Raq* takes inspiration from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, a 411 BC Greek comedy about women going on a sex strike to get their men to end the Peloponnesian War. If that's a reference that resonates without taking a jaunt to Wikipedia, then well done you. Lee's version, co-written with Kevin Willmott, transposes this conceit to Chicago. Gang violence has made it a place where gunfire is everyday background noise and children die on the street with a regularity that has dulled the shock, if not the pain. It has earned the portmanteau *Chi-Raq*. *Lysistrata* (Teyonah Parris, powerfully assertive, matching co-stars like Angela Bassett at every step), the girlfriend of one prominent gang

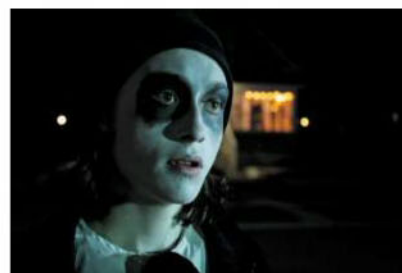
member (Nick Cannon), decides the only way to make the men put down their guns and take pause is to deny them sex. "No peace, no pussy." The whole story is presented in loosely rhyming verse (surprise two).

For the many of us not steeped in ancient Greek classics, *Chi-Raq*'s style and story is more likely to bring to mind Shakespeare, and it's a comparison that helps its strangeness settle. As Shakespeare played with big themes in silly comedy, so can Lee. That the characters are speaking in verse takes away a need for the entire film to seem 'real'. Of course, the possibility of a lack of action in the sheets bringing about peace on the streets is absurd, but the points it allows Lee to raise are far from it. He can speak about police brutality, government corruption and anger at black communities oppressing themselves with violence, without overloading his film with overt messaging. With the stagey, experimental presentation he frees himself from having to deliver an always coherent plot, so he can play with ideas. As much as ancient Greek or Shakespearean verse, you might as easily think of it as freestyle rap. Sometimes it drifts, then it explodes.

It doesn't always cohere, particularly a segment where the women take over a government armory, which comes from nowhere and doesn't particularly go anywhere, but it's always clear what Lee is trying to say. Another effect of the deliberately unreal style is that when Lee's characters mention real-life incidents — Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, the Charleston church shooting — they hit somehow harder. They yank you back to why he's saying this. He might be playing on screen, Lee seems to be telling us, but outside it's not a game.

Its messy moments fade behind the many mighty, funny, powerful scenes that sit with you long after. That it sometimes gets muddled is almost encouraging. Lee still has so many ideas in him that they're racing out of him faster than he can control them. **OLLY RICHARDS**

**VERDICT** A Molotov cocktail of laughs and anger, *Chi-Raq* is a powerful state of a nation address. The result is the most creatively exciting Lee has been in a decade.



## I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER

★★★★★

OUT 9 DECEMBER / CERT 15 / 101 MINS

DIRECTOR Billy O'Brien

CAST Max Records, Christopher Lloyd,  
Laura Fraser

**TAKE THE FLASHBACKS** to the teenage version of Michael C. Hall's Dexter and cross them with Michael C. Hall's character from *Six Feet Under*. You have John Wayne Cleaver (Records): a lank-haired, plaid-wearing outsider-teen who is obsessed by serial killers and (overly) fascinated by the bodies in his family's funeral home. Unsurprisingly, the jocks at school call him 'freak', his mother (Fraser) is worried about him and the only person he bonds with is his elderly neighbour (Lloyd). More surprising, thankfully, is the path he ends up taking, which — coupled with a unique tone that is as wry as it is dark — makes for a compelling journey from start to finish. **HM**



## LIFE, ANIMATED

★★★★★

OUT 9 DECEMBER / CERT PG / 92 MINS

DIRECTOR Roger Ross Williams

CAST Owen Suskind, Ron Suskind,  
Cornelia Suskind, Walter Suskind

**DENIED THE ABILITY** to speak well enough to be understood by the onset of autism aged three, Owen Suskind discovered an ability to communicate through reciting lines from his favourite Disney films. Now aged 23, his remarkable story is told with poignancy and charm in a documentary that makes astute use of classic clips and original animation that not only charts Owen's heroic journey, but also offers insights into his psyche through his self-penned story, *The Land Of The Lost Sidekicks*. Supported by his devoted parents and older brother Walt (seriously), Owen now lives an independent life and, if Roger Ross Williams occasionally over-tugs on the heartstrings, he can be forgiven for unearthing such an inspirational subject. **DP**



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## CINEMA

# THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN

★★★★

OUT 30 NOVEMBER  
CERT 15 / 104 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Kelly Fremon Craig

**CAST** Hailee Steinfeld, Haley Lu Richardson, Blake Jenner

**PLOT** Everything that happens to Nadine (Steinfeld) is unfair, at least in her eyes. She lost her beloved dad and now she's about to lose her only friend, who has started dating her despised brother. The world is out to get her and nobody knows what's she's going through. She is, in short, a teenager.

**NADINE BYRD IS** a self-declared "old soul". This tells you a lot about her. 1) She thinks about herself an enormous amount; 2) She doesn't believe she fits in with the rest of her generation; 3) She's kind of a dick, because really, who says that? Kelly Fremon Craig's debut is a bravely honest, very funny movie about what it is to be a teenager, when you think you're different and that nobody understands you, but really it's you who has yet to get a grip on yourself. She doesn't always put us on her heroine's side, but she asks that we always understand her and makes sure we do.

Nadine (Steinfeld) is an awkward, precocious high-school junior, who has one friend, Krista (Richardson), and one parent, having lost her beloved dad a few years ago. When Krista starts dating Nadine's brother Darian (Jenner), who Nadine thinks has led an unfairly charmed life and resents him for it, it is the end of her world. She has, she believes, lost the one remaining person who understood her. She is now all alone.

Nadine is not someone to whom it's easy to warm. She lashes out easily and always believes she is the wronged party. If you think of other good isolated-teen movies, there's usually an element of the lead having been in some way

unfairly treated. *Sixteen Candles*' Sam is ignored at home and embarrassed at school; *Easy A*'s Olive was vilified for being promiscuous, even though she wasn't; *Mean Girls*' Cady was subtly bullied for caring about things other than popularity. Nadine is just unhappy that some things haven't gone her way. She's suffered loss, but so has her brother. It's a bold choice by Fremon Craig to make Nadine's only antagonist herself, but it works because, for one, she's cast Steinfeld in the lead, who can give bruised layers to the anger and snappy delivery to the jokes. She keeps her interesting. In a solo scene where Nadine, locked in a bathroom at a party, begs herself not to be awkward and to make friends, she gets you on side. Fremon Craig keeps seeding these reminders about the softness under the shell.

The other thing she does is to superbly write and cast supporting characters to call Nadine on her bullshit and see something more in her, encouraging us to do the same. In the opening scene, Nadine runs into a classroom to tell her teacher Mr. Bruner (Woody Harrelson) that she's going to kill herself. Rather than try to discourage her, Bruner explains he's thinking about doing the same, for much better reasons. He sees through her nonsense. A nerdy classmate (Hayden Szeto, adorable as a useless flirt) who wants to date Nadine but keeps getting cruelly rebuffed shows Nadine she treats other people the way she thinks they treat her. Fremon Craig draws the whole Nadine via the people around her, so even when you don't like her, you like those who do, which circles you back to liking her.

Though everything Nadine is going through is standard teenage stuff, Fremon Craig stays away from the touchstones of the genre — there are no bullies, no big prom, no cruel teachers or cliques. She treats her subject with grown-up respect, even if she's not quite a grown-up yet. **OLLY RICHARDS**

**VERDICT** A very strong debut by writer-director Kelly Fremon Craig deals with all the usual teenage concerns — dating, family, school — in a way that tries to go beyond genre cliché, with a heroine who is often unlikeable but always believable.



## THE ARDENNES

★★★

OUT 2 DECEMBER / CERT 15 / 96 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Robin Pront

**CAST** Kevin Janssens, Jeroen Perceval, Veerle Baetens

TWO BROTHERS FACE a rocky reunion when one is released from prison after a four-year sentence. The wrinkle? They committed the crime together. Belgian writer/director Robert Pront's debut starts out as a coarse kitchen-sink drama and evolves into a curious cabin-in-the-woods thriller. While it proffers little originality (bar some surprising ostrich cameos) and sports a jarring soundtrack, the film's bleak, Coen-esque sense of isolation, cold brutality and confident performances (Janssens is beautifully unpredictable as the recently released Kenny) make for an engaging story that culminates in an enjoyably nasty conclusion. Don't expect the Dardennes, and *The Ardennes* won't disappoint. **AW**



## THE EAGLE HUNTRESS

★★★

OUT 16 DECEMBER / CERT TBC / 87 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Otto Bell

**CAST** Daisy Ridley (narrator), Aisholpan Nurgaiv

IN THE ALTAI Mountains of Mongolia, Kazakh hunters still continue the ancient tradition of hunting with golden eagles. An art that's only ever been passed from father to son, until 13-year-old Aisholpan Nurgaiv resolves to become her people's first ever Eagle Huntress. She's an appealing subject, but Bell's eagerness to push his girl-against-the-patriarchy theme ends up damaging his documentary. There's also an odd absence of naturalism, with certain moments feeling engineered rather than discovered. None of which can take away from the film's stunning landscape cinematography, or awesome eagle footage. But the lack of subtlety is so pronounced, it denies itself the greatness its story and subjects truly deserve. **DJ**





Nat Turner harvests the cotton.

CINEMA

## THE BIRTH OF A NATION

★★★★★

OUT 9 DECEMBER  
CERT 15 / 120 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Nate Parker

**CAST** Nate Parker, Armie Hammer, Aja Naomi King, Jackie Earle Haley, Dwight Henry

**PLOT** Virginia, 1831. Plantation preacher Nat Turner (Parker) broods over a plan to lead an uprising of fellow slaves against their tyrannical masters. But the likely consequences for him, his wife (King) and their young child give him pause.

**NATE PARKER'S FIERCE**, flawed paean to one of America's most contentious figures would, in any normal situation, be crashing into awards season like grapes. A name-checking repudiation of D.W. Griffith's mythologising, racist 1915 epic of the Deep South, it seemed destined to clean up on Oscars night. Then its creator's own troubled past resurfaced to overshadow it and the buzz dissipated. But the performances are strong, its themes particularly timely in this

era of Black Lives Matter, and its protagonist's stirring arc provides enough stand-out moments to fill an awards showreel on its own.

We'll never know how successful it could have been. But put aside the rancour and controversy, and you'll find an occasionally uneven but always gripping work from a first-time filmmaker with genuine fire in his belly. Even more than *12 Years A Slave*, a more clear-eyed and elegant but less visceral experience, *The Birth Of A Nation* broils and brims with quiet rage, eventually bubbling over in a final act that recreates Turner's 1831 slave uprising in a Tarantino-esque hack-and-slash orgy.

The film opens with Turner (Parker) as a boy, learning to read, witnessing the brutality of slave owners and, thanks to the three distinctive birthmarks on his chest, finding himself proclaimed as a leader by slave elders. At night, those prophecies manifest in disquieting dream sequences, hinting at a higher purpose in life. One gorgeous shot of a sun-kissed cottonfield is abutted by the sight of the young Turner's hand as it's pierced by a cotton thorn. As the film shifts forward two decades, the message is clear: this rural idyll is lacquered with the blood of slaves.

The storytelling is at its strongest in a middle section that shows the thoughtful Turner's oratory skills played into a job as a slave preacher. Hired

out by his boozy, debt-stricken master Samuel Turner (Hammer) to his fellow plantation owners, Turner is basically crowd-control with a Bible. Parker perfectly captures a man torn between collaboration and defiance, forced to help prop up a structure he knows is rotten from the ground up. As he witnesses endless cruelties against his fellow slaves, you can feel his blood rising. The relationship between the two Turners, boyhood friends-turned-master and chattel, recalls Dirk Bogarde and Edward Fox in *The Servant*. One shrinks in stature as the other readies himself to fulfill those childhood prophecies.

The uprising itself — as the history books will testify — was a more compromised act of defiance. Its victims included women and children, not just the two-dimensional villains who fall before its muskets and hachets. A century after *The Birth Of A Nation* lionised the Ku Klux Klan as Southern nobility, Parker strives to redress the balance but skirts over some of the story's more inconvenient truths. But if the denouement doesn't quite ring true, what comes before remains soul-shakingly powerful. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

**VERDICT** An unapologetic, impassioned biopic, *The Birth Of A Nation* begins quietly but ends in a howl of rage. It might not be perfect, but it's powerful enough to stay with you.





## FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

★★★

OUT NOW  
CERT 12A / 133 MINS

**DIRECTOR** David Yates

**CAST** Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Colin Farrell, Samantha Morton, Dan Fogler, Alison Sudol, Ezra Miller, Carmen Ejogo

**PLOT** Newt Scamander (Redmayne) arrives in New York to pursue his work promoting the care of magical creatures, but finds himself drawn into a conflict between the wizarding world and witch-hunters led by Mary Lou Barebone (Morton).

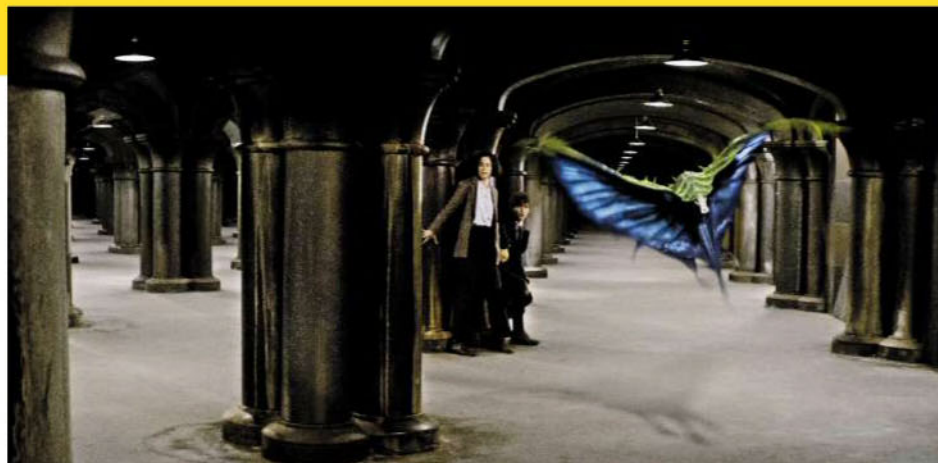
YOU HAVE TO credit J.K. Rowling. Rather than spin off new big-screen adventures for the generation-defining boy wizard, she and the Warner Bros. team have opened a completely different wizarding saga: a new era, new country and entirely new characters (at least so far). That's a lot of world-building to do, so this film has a bit of the same dense exposition of the first two *Potter* films. But thanks to Rowling's capacity for invention and some utterly glorious new beasts like kleptomaniac platypus the Niffler, the gamble largely succeeds — and, as you'd expect, it looks dazzling doing it.

The visual panache comes with a whole lot of plot. Hogwarts black sheep Newt Scamander (Redmayne) is fresh off the boat when he meets 'No-Maj'/Muggle Jacob Kowalski (Fogler) outside a New York bank. They're carrying similar suitcases — Jacob's contains pastries while Newt's is brimming with mystical creatures he is studying

— so you can spot one thing that might go wrong immediately. At the same time, Porentina Goldstein (Waterston) spots Newt and suspects him to be a threat to magical safety. That also, potentially, makes Newt her way back into the good graces of MACUSA, the local magical government agency and her employer.

Redmayne works hard as Newt, who's as chronically bad with people as he is amiable and well-meaning, a dotty professorial type who peers up from under a shock of hair and avoids eye-contact. But he's so disconnected and withdrawn that he barely shifts facial expression from friendly blankness for the first half hour, when we *really* need him to guide us around. Instead, his new buddy Jacob is clearly meant as our way into the magical world and its comic relief, but his flirtations with Alison Sudol, as Porentina's sister Queenie, largely suck screen-time really needed for Newt and Tina, the ostensible leads.





Clockwise from left:  
Jacob, Newt and  
Porentina tiptoe  
into trouble; The  
Swooping Evil gets  
loose; Frank the  
Thunderbird takes  
charge; The Niffler  
tries on the bung.

It's almost the end of the film before they get to connect — a shame, because there is obvious fellow-feeling there and a shared sense of purpose.

While the leads chase Newt's fugitive creatures and flout the laws against fraternising with Muggles (or 'No-Majs'), a shadowy prologue has warned of dark magician Gellert Grindelwald. MACUSA's stern boss, Seraphina Picquery (Ejogo), is holding international summits about Grindelwald with characters who will probably be more important down the line (hello, Gemma Chan!). Meanwhile Picquery's head agent, Graves (Farrell) — compelling but slightly shiftily — investigates a destructive force that seems to attack the city at random, threatening to reveal the wizarding world to the rest of us. Many of these characters around the edges of the story stand out better than the leads. That's particularly true of Samantha Morton, spitting venom as witch-hater Mary Lou Barebone, and Ezra Miller, who's

bruisingly excellent as her sorely abused eldest boy.

But the film has some structural problems. Rowling's varied beasts are fun, and brilliantly realised by the effects team, but they're ultimately a sideshow, and the numerous action sequences to capture each one can drag. The sight of Oscar winner Redmayne performing a mating dance for a giant hippo-monster will stay with you, but it's not what we need to see when there are truly dastardly dealings afoot across town. It's only in the last act, when Newt focuses on the real threats and discovers the mystery to solve, that the film soars, like Newt's glorious thunderbird Frank, into the heavens. **HELEN O'HARA**

**VERDICT** Big, bold and teeming with imagination, it is so busy world-building that it occasionally forgets to have fun. But with this heavy lifting done, there's every reason to hope for an even more magical adventure next time.



## THE UNKNOWN GIRL

★★★

OUT 2 DECEMBER / CERT TBC / 113 MINS

**DIRECTORS** Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne

**CAST** Adèle Haenel, Olivier Bonnaud

THE DARDENNE BROTHERS' latest is a drama with a crime at its heart anchored by an amateur gumshoe, idealist doctor Jenny Davin (Haenel). The mysterious death of an immigrant she'd failed to help sends the young GP on a quest to uncover the woman's identity that takes in patients, locals and the police. Despite a car chase, the filmmaking siblings haven't suddenly gone all *CSI*: Liège on us, though. What follows is a social-realist procedural that softly explores the ways in which a community opens and closes itself to outsiders and humanely emphasises the importance of dignity in death. While a middling effort by the brothers' high standards, *The Unknown Girl* is still an involving, thoughtful watch. **PDS**



## THE PASS

★★★

OUT 9 DECEMBER / CERT 15 / 87 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Ben A. Williams

**CAST** Russell Tovey, Arinzé Kene, Lisa McGrillis

RUSSELL TOVEY EXCELS in this intense adaptation of John Donnelly's Royal Court smash. A literal three-act structure, it starts with young footballers Jason (Tovey) and Ade (Kene) larking about in a Bucharest hotel room until one of them kisses the other. As Jason becomes a Rooney-esque superstar, the ramifications of 'the pass' are played out in two further talk-driven vignettes, a tabloid sting sprung by a sparky Lisa McGrillis and a reconnection with Ade ten years later. It's a static and stagey chamber piece, but the strong writing — themes range from the loneliness of fame to the disparity between private and public lives — and performances by a gentle Kene and a blistering Tovey make it work. **IF**





## CINEMA

## PATERSON

★★★★

OUT 25 NOVEMBER  
CERT TBC / 113 MINS

DIRECTOR Jim Jarmusch

CAST Adam Driver, Golshifteh Farahani,  
Barry Shabaka Henley

**PLOT** Paterson (Driver) is a bus driver and poet who lives in Paterson, New Jersey, whose existence follows a quiet, humdrum pattern. And it's him the film follows, over eight typical days in his life.

YOU CAN BE sure nothing much will happen in a Jim Jarmusch film, but that it will fail to happen in interesting ways. Even when he dabbled in Westerns with *Dead Man*, or vampires with *Only Lovers Left Alive*, Jarmusch focused on languorous pauses and non-events, finding his drama and comedy in the tiny shifts of everyday life. That's never been more true than in this profoundly understated character study, which is stuffed with charm and humour but entirely devoid of major incident.

Adam Driver stars as Paterson, a bus driver and amateur poet in the industrial town of Paterson, New Jersey. Over the course of just over a week we see his life quietly unfold, full of small crises and overheard conversations on the bus. He scratches out poetry between shifts, usually sitting in contemplation beside the town's Great Falls. At home his wife, Laura (Farahani), has usually created some new monochromatic artwork; even her baking is black-and-white. They eat dinner, Paterson walks his (scene-stealing) dog Marvin to a quiet bar and then goes home to bed.

That's almost the entire plot, repeated over eight days, but Jarmusch's eye for detail and humanity makes it close to riveting. There's tension in the suspicion that something will upset Paterson's quiet existence, and indeed, signals throughout suggest myriad ways that

things could go wrong. Jarmusch layers parallels between his hero, the location and a book of William Carlos Williams' poetry — also called *Paterson* — that clearly inspired Jarmusch and to which Driver's character keeps returning. There are surreal touches: a preponderance of twins, and characters who might be projections of Paterson's mind, so closely do they mirror his thoughts.

Mostly, however, the supporting cast navigate their own odd little paths. Farahani is luminously good as Laura, in a role that might have been silly or even cruel in other versions of this story. She has no steady job, wiles away her days on art of varying merit and makes occasionally extravagant demands of her husband. But she's also a creative whirlwind who is clearly as devoted to him as he is to her, lovingly designing him a packed lunch every day and experimenting with new meals each evening — to his gentle appreciation even when the results are clearly inedible.

Outside their home, Barry Shabaka Henley is warmly funny as Doc, the bartender friend who spends evenings in companionable silence with Paterson, and there are witty vignettes with passing strangers of generally cheery disposition. It's the sort of world where characters hope to make their fortune in chess, or cupcakes, and where even violence is strangely non-threatening. There's something nostalgic about the fading industrial landscape of the town, in Doc's jazz bar and its visitors. Even the sort of blue-collar artist that Paterson embodies seems like one of the mid-20th century Beat poets rather than any inhabitant of the 21st.

But it's Driver's still, deep Paterson who makes it work, with a performance that could not be less showy, nor more effective. Paterson's modernist poetry runs through the film, both narrated by Driver and placed on screen. It starts off sounding gauche and childlike, but by the end it's become almost meditative. And perhaps even profound. **HELEN O'HARA**

**VERDICT** Quiet, thoughtful and deeply human, this is one of Jarmusch's finest and features Adam Driver's best performance yet — although you do risk coming out with a new affection for modernist poetry.



## I AM BOLT

★★★★

OUT 28 NOVEMBER / CERT PG / 103 MINS

DIRECTORS Gabe Turner, Benjamin Turner

CAST Usain Bolt, Yohan Blake, Asafa Powell,  
Serena Williams, Neymar, Pelé

PERHAPS THERE'S A more penetrating film to be made once Usain Bolt is out of the clutches of his sponsors, but this documentary is a more than solid place-holder until then. Following him as he trains for this year's Olympics, intercutting the story of his career up to this year, there's not much beyond a hagiography — he can't be this straightforward, can he? — but the footage of him training is fascinating, and seeing his Olympic triumphs on the big screen is genuinely spectacular. Right now the people want their smiling goofball genius, and this delivers exactly that — a hefty dose of Bolt's billion-dollar charm, and then some. Sometimes hero worship is okay if you're worshipping someone who is deserving of it. **AL**



## THE SON OF JOSEPH

★★★★

OUT 16 DECEMBER / CERT 12A / 113 MINS

DIRECTOR Eugène Green

CAST Victor Ezenfis, Natacha Régnier,  
Fabrizio Rongione, Mathieu Amalric

EUGÈNE GREEN'S RAREFIED Baroque theatricality isn't for everyone, but admirers of Dreyer, Bresson and De Oliveira will find much to laud in this bold updating of the Holy Family story that centres on a 15-year-old Parisian's determination to find his father. The cast excels at delivering droll dramatic dialogue in a deadpan manner that complements the compositional formalism, while Green makes exquisite use of painting, music and poetry to suggest that spirituality remains relevant in our cynically secular world. Somewhat unexpectedly produced by the ultra-realist Dardenne brothers, this may not bring Green many new converts, but it will surprise aficionados with its accessible allusion, elegant energy and unassuming humanity. **DP**



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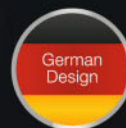


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feel good





The Jeremy Kyle Show had upped the stakes.

CINEMA

## SNOWDEN

★★★★

OUT 2 DECEMBER  
CERT TBC / 134 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Oliver Stone

**CAST** Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Shailene Woodley, Zachary Quinto, Melissa Leo

**PLOT** After injury kills his dream of being a soldier, computer whizz Edward Snowden (Gordon-Levitt) finds success as a government intelligence agent — and love with a spirited photographer (Woodley). But when he learns about the NSA's secret global surveillance, he risks it all to reveal the truth.

**THE PHRASE** “TOO soon” doesn’t seem to apply when it comes to big-screen adaptations of politically charged global scandals. Not long after WikiLeaks’ name-making Guantanamo Bay files, Benedict Cumberbatch was slipping on a Malfoy wig for *The Fifth Estate*. Leonardo DiCaprio has already optioned an unpublished book on Volkswagen’s 2015 emissions cover-up. And now — just three years after Edward Snowden’s NSA revelations — here comes

Oliver Stone’s thrillingly relevant biopic of the government analyst-turned-whistleblower.

We open in 2013, in Hong Kong, as journalist Glenn Greenwald (Quinto) and documentarian Laura Poitras (Leo) nervily await a rendezvous with Snowden (Gordon-Levitt), who arrives with all manner of digital secrets to spill. Next, we flashback to 2004, where Snowden is a medically discharged special forces recruit who washes up in the CIA’s cyber branch, and an intercut timeline helps thread a link between the past and present, hopping back and forth between Snowden’s career and his twitchy current existence, hiding in his hotel room.

The time-jumps are a simple but effective narrative device and Snowden’s former life — as a pro-Dubya patriot — only adds to the emotional heft of his decision to reveal the Big Brother-ish extent of the US government’s spying. Yes, his global tour — encompassing governmental jobs in mainland America, Switzerland, Japan and Hawaii — can occasionally feel jarringly episodic. But the foregrounding of his tempestuous relationship with photographer girlfriend Lindsay (Woodley) acts as a solid narrative spine and casts *Snowden* as something of an alternative love story.

Not that it’s light on sweaty-palmed drama or provocative politics. Late on, Stone expertly

wrings tension from little more than a loading bar and a hidden SD card. And although the director’s illustrative tools are occasionally blunt — one of Snowden’s first epiphanies concerns a supposedly inactive laptop camera filming a Muslim woman removing her veil — his anger at the rapaciousness of post-9/11 surveillance comes out eloquently.

He’s assisted by an in-form cast, too. Woodley lights up every scene, Rhys Ifans sells his quietly sinister father figure and Gordon-Levitt grows into a performance that initially seems distractingly mannered. The real-life Snowden, still an exile in Russia, was consulted heavily and a third act decision to show off this admittedly impressive access seems ill-judged. In fact, there’s a pervading sense that potentially interesting avenues (Snowden’s self-interest, the consequences of his international fame) are ignored in favour of an overwhelmingly heroic, almost saintly, character arc. But, ultimately, this can’t detract from a capably delivered thriller that’s as powerful as it is pertinent. **JIMI FAMUREWA**

**VERDICT** Aided by a dialled-down Gordon-Levitt, Stone skilfully demystifies one of the Obama era’s most compelling stories. It’s a welcome return to form for a cinematic sleeping giant.



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CINEMA

## DOCTOR STRANGE

★★★★★

OUT NOW  
CERT 12A / 115 MINS**DIRECTOR** Scott Derrickson**CAST** Benedict Cumberbatch, Mads Mikkelsen, Tilda Swinton, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Rachel McAdams

**PLOT** After mangling his hands in a car crash, neurosurgeon Stephen Strange (Cumberbatch) finds his career in ruins. Desperate for healing, he heads to Nepal, where a secret order of magicians led by the enigmatic Ancient One (Swinton) induct him into the mystical arts.

### JAMES MANGOLD RECENTLY

tweeted a page from the script of his upcoming *Logan*, in which a note on the action states it will not be a “hyper choreographed, gravity defying, city-block destroying, CG fuckathon”. The three-clawed dig at Marvel Studios is not wholly undeserved. New York, Washington, London, Sokovia and half the planet Xandar have all been victims of Marvel third acts, wholesale destruction of public property having become an all but mandatory component in its winning formula.

As with last year’s *Ant-Man*, *Doctor Strange* is meant as a break from that routine. But where *Ant-Man* used levity and a smaller (in every sense) story to break the rhythm, *Doctor Strange* rolls the Marvel paradigm into a hefty joint and invites us to smoke it over the course of two stunning, psychedelic hours.

Strange’s origin tale starts predictably enough (smug, at the top of his profession, before an accident sets him on the path to superhero-dom), but on reaching the Himalayan temple of Kamar-Taj, he and we embark on a phantasmagorical vision quest unlike anything the studio has done before. Forcibly ripped from his corporeal form, Cumberbatch’s physician is cast onto the astral plane for a sequence that plays out like Salvador Dalí’s wettest dream. We tumble into the void, passing comets and crystals before shooting into

the event horizon of a black hole, along a tunnel of exploding fractals into a sea of kaleidoscopic colour. From there Strange is sucked down into his own eye while hands sprout from smaller hands at the end of his fingers and writhing, naked bodies melt into the landscape of his mind. “Have you seen that in a gift shop?” quips Swinton’s magic monk.

Horizons broadened, Strange is introduced to both the magical arts and the threats they’re used as a defence against: chiefly Kaecilius (Mads Mikkelsen), a former student of Kamar-Taj whose pact with a demonic entity threatens to end the world. It’s a far from revolutionary story but the invention with which it’s told is something else entirely. Gravity, time and reality all become weapons during the film’s eye-popping magical brawls. Cityscapes fold in upon themselves, Escher-inspired architecture unravelling and reforming around the combatants as they wield burning geometric shapes. There are battles on the astral plane, a chase through time reversing and the introduction of an entirely new fighting style that might best be described as cape-fu. It’s an audacious display of artistry that manages to pack more trippy creativity into one movie than all 13 of Marvel’s previous offerings combined.

As the Sorcerer Supreme, Cumberbatch demonstrates an easy charm, overriding the character’s playboy smugness and leavening talk of Dormammu, Agamotto and the Wands Of Watoomb with a wry sense of humour. The others fare less well, with Rachel McAdams and Chiwetel Ejiofor in particular being starved of both screen time and purpose, while Mikkelsen’s threadbare antagonist is all outline and no shading.

Introducing spells and sorcery to the MCU — not to mention doing it via a wizard resembling a prog rock drummer — is Marvel’s riskiest move yet, but the gamble pays off. This is a confident stride into new territory that reinvigorates a tired formula while expanding the shared universe — both a reality-defying “CG fuckathon” and the most dazzling spectacle of the year. **JAMES DYER**

**VERDICT** A bizarre and beautiful detour on the Marvel journey, which culminates in a mind-bending, expectation-inverting final act. Not to be watched under the influence.



## CREEPY

★★★

OUT 25 NOVEMBER / CERT TBC / 130 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Kiyoshi Kurosawa**CAST** Hidetoshi Nishijima, Yûko Takeuchi

A TRAUMATISED EX-DETECTIVE (Nishijima) puts boosting his bruised ego before his neglected wife’s (Takeuchi) safety as she falls under the spell of a sinister neighbour in this unsettling psychological thriller. Always the master of menacing atmosphere and darkly satirical critique, Kurosawa exploits the contrivances in Yutaka Maekawa’s source novel to lure the audience into the twisted milieu of an elusive psychopath who dupes his victims into committing his crimes before disposing of the evidence in vacuum-sealed bags. Eschewing easy empathy and malignity, the performances are excellent, as are the ominous interiors and the insinuating camerawork. It’s just a shame that Kurosawa pulls the rug with a decidedly underwhelming denouement. **DP**



## MAGNUS

★★★★★

OUT 25 NOVEMBER / CERT U / 78 MINS

**DIRECTOR** Benjamin Ree**CAST** Magnus Carlsen

WORLD CHESS CHAMPION Magnus Carlsen, as we are told during the film that bears his name, is the Mozart of chess. Which means there must be a modern *Amadeus* to be made from his life-story. But for now this insightful, intimate documentary will more than suffice. In part, *Magnus* is an origin story, with director Benjamin Ree taking advantage of the wealth of home-video material from 25-year-old Carlsen’s childhood. But the documentary’s most fascinating when it’s examining his unique, intuitive play style. There’s an enticing mystery here: *how* does Magnus play like this, so effortlessly yet so mind-bogglingly well? It’s an engaging study of a beautiful mind, which also reveals the stressful nature of world-class chess tournaments **DJ**



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## TV &amp; STREAMING

## GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE

★★★★★

NETFLIX  
OUT 25 NOVEMBER  
EPISODES VIEWED 1-2

**SHOWRUNNERS** Amy Sherman-Palladino, Daniel Palladino  
**CAST** Lauren Graham, Alexis Bledel, Kelly Bishop

**PLOT** Almost a decade after we last saw them, Lorelai Gilmore (Graham) still lives in Star's Hollow with boyfriend Luke (Scott Patterson). But when her daughter Rory (Bledel) visits and her mother Emily (Bishop) is bereaved, all three face a life crisis.

IMAGINE IF *HIS Girl Friday's* Hildy Johnson moved to Bedford Falls, had an equally fast-talking kid and genned up on pop culture. That's *Gilmore Girls*, which returns on Netflix with four feature-length, seasonally themed episodes. It's essentially a family drama, set in a small town that really is straight from *It's A Wonderful Life*. But it's also one of the fastest-talking, smartest shows ever made. These four films, with original showrunners Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino back after sitting out the show's seventh and final season, aim to give it the send-off Sherman-Palladino always intended. Judging by the first two episodes, they may succeed.

It's not easy to describe the particular appeal of *Gilmore Girls* to the uninitiated. There's a whimsical, soft-focus touch to that fairy-tale setting that can seem cloying at first, and the rhythms of the language verge on stagey —

especially here, where the cast are visibly settling back into their roles. But there's meat and grit in the relationships that give it edge, and its blend of wit and warmth means that fans put this on a level with *The West Wing* or *The Sopranos*. Lauren Graham's Lorelai, and to a lesser extent her daughter Rory (Alexis Bledel) and mother Emily (Kelly Bishop) supply an endless flood of wisecracks, put-downs and gags that stop the story of three generations of Gilmore girls from feeling mawkish or overly sentimental.

That's really the nub of the plot: three generations of women muddling along. Lorelai fell pregnant at 16 and cut her wealthy, disapproving parents out of her life for years — something Emily never quite forgave. But they're both devoted to Lorelai's daughter Rory, a rare A-student good girl who wasn't painted into geekishness. Now 32, she's a journalist casting about for her next step in life. Lorelai is long





Clockwise from left: Emily (Kelly Bishop), Lorelai (Lauren Graham) and Rory (Alexis Bledel) are reunited; Star's Hollow remains a close-knit community; Lorelai and Luke (Scott Patterson) are still happy together.

settled with the series' will-they-won't-they love interest Luke (Scott Patterson) and has become a respectable hotel owner, but she still clashes with Emily like a sulky teenager. Their meandering course continues here. Both Lorelai and Rory are feeling increasing unease about the direction of their lives, while Emily grieves for her now departed husband Richard (the late Edward Herrmann, to whom the first episode is dedicated).

But the show's delight lies in its tapestry of characters and, remarkably, the rest of them have all returned. Gilmore exes and acquaintances, as well as the eccentric residents of Star's Hollow, are all present and correct, down to Gypsy the mechanic (Rose Abdoo), mean schoolgirl Francie (Emily Bergl) and the town troubadour (Grant-Lee Phillips). It's a testament to the affection in which the show is held — by those who made it as well as audiences. And it allows us to see town busybody Taylor Doose (Michael Winters)

continue his relentless Star's Hollow improvement crusade, and Mrs Kim (Emily Kuroda) still browbeating her young, Christian charges.

Time has passed even in this world — there are distractingly vogueish discussions about the decline of print media, and internet start-ups run by appallingly young millennials — and, with Rory now the same age Lorelai was at the beginning of the show, the Gilmores are no longer promising young things with their entire lives ahead of them. But even though they grapple with ageing in an uncertain world, Star's Hollow, and *Gilmore Girls*, remains a pleasure you don't have to feel guilty about. **HELEN O'HARA**

**VERDICT** There are moments when it feels like *Gilmore* karaoke, as the cast get used to their roles again. But once they catch the rhythms of the speech, it's a very welcome return to the warm embrace of Star's Hollow.



## DIVINES

★★★★

NETFLIX / OUT NOW / CERT TBC / 106 MINS

DIRECTOR Houda Benyamina

CAST Oulaya Amamra, Déborah Lukumena

WINNER OF THIS year's *Caméra d'or* at Cannes, Houda Benyamina's blistering *Divines* is *La Haine* through a female filter. It follows Dounia (Amamra, a star in the making), a disenfranchised teen who looks to escape her French shantytown life by running errands and selling drugs for the local crime queen (Jisca Kalvanda). It gets overwrought and conventional in its final act but, for the most part, Benyamina's film is fierce and fresh. She lobs in creative fireworks (fantasy sequences, iPhone aspect ratios) and bags of attitude ("You've got clit. I like that"), but the thing you'll remember is the touching central friendship between Dounia and wisecracking bestie Maimouna (Lukumena). Raw and real, it marks Benyamina as an exciting name to watch. **IF**



## TROLLHUNTERS

★★★

NETFLIX / OUT 23 DECEMBER / CERT TBC / EPISODES VIEWED 1, 2 & 6

SHOWRUNNER Guillermo del Toro

CAST (VOICES) Anton Yelchin, Kelsey Grammer, Charlie Saxton, Ron Perlman

WITH ITS INVENTIVE freakshow of rocky monsters, hidden, mythical world and modern-day remixing of traditional fairy-tale notions, DreamWorks' 'toon series *Trollhunters* finds Guillermo del Toro stomping on familiar ground. Based on his own kids' novel, it owes a lot to *Hellboy II* (there's even a place called the Troll Market), though that film's joyful irreverence is here diluted into quite-bland CG fare about a predictably unlikely teen hero (Yelchin) who finds a magic amulet and becomes the first human "Trollhunter". Still, the action sequences are inventive, and you can't get too snuffy about a story with a pacifist monster named AAARRRGHH!!! who likes eating VHS cassettes. **DJ**





## GAMES

## CALL OF DUTY: INFINITE WARFARE



OUT NOW

FORMATS PC, PS4, XBOX ONE

DIRECTOR Taylor Kurosaki

CAST Brian Bloom, Kit Harington, Claudia Black

**PLOT** With colonies across the Solar System, humanity is heading to the stars, but disaster looms when the Settlement Defence Force launches a strike for independence, forcing UN Space Alliance lieutenant Nick Reyes (Bloom) to lead the charge against SDF leader Salen Kotch (Harington).

**THE LATEST INSTALMENT** of Activision's perennial shooter franchise packs in a *lot* — single-player campaign, multiplayer, a new Zombies mode, flight missions for PlayStation VR, and even a fully fledged remake of 2007's *Modern Warfare* in higher-tier packages. Whatever else, you're definitely getting bang for your buck.

The solo campaign is serviceable, although it does a good job of drawing you into Nick Reyes' (Bloom) real conflict: whether the mission's success or your team's lives are more important in war. Credit for this largely goes to the voice cast, who do a stand-up job of selling characters little removed from the standard 'band of brothers' found in other military fables. But the story as a whole is hard to buy into, the SDF being little more than caricatured space fascists, with nationalistic slogans and a propaganda machine that only Donald Trump might think low-key.

Thankfully, *Infinite Warfare's* gameplay makes up for narrative blandness. Shooting gallery mechanics are livened up with futuristic weapons and armour that border on super-powered. Encounters are rarely dull, while set-pieces dotted around the Solar System delight, mixing variable gravity and harsh environments for some thrilling action. Aerial battles — both in planetary atmosphere and dogfights in space — and story-

based side missions (a *COD* first) are nice touches.

This all translates rather well into the multiplayer. While functionally similar to *Black Ops III*, *Infinite Warfare's* future tech abilities make it feel more like *Destiny* than traditional *COD*. This may anger franchise purists, but the wall runs and boost jumps pair perfectly with combat rigs offering customisable super moves — a favourite being the ability to shift into a savage dog-bot mode to maul opponents.

Meanwhile, in the 1980s, *Zombies In Spaceland* offers an entirely different multiplayer experience utterly divorced from the main game. Trapped in a theme park, with David Hasselhoff as the DJ, teams of four battle endless undead hordes. They're all predictable '80s stereotypes (jock, nerd, cheerleader etc) but there's no distinction in terms of controls. *Spaceland* is notably easier than previous *Zombies* modes, though, almost to the point of hand-holding, and you'll make it through numerous waves of enemies before breaking a sweat. There's a balance between challenge and fun to be struck, but it's not quite found here.

For everything *Infinite Warfare* does right, though, it's hard to ignore the fact that a whole lot of players will be in this purely for that remastered *Modern Warfare*, bundled in with the pricier Legacy and Deluxe editions.

Developed by Raven Software and packing in the full campaign and its own multiplayer (ten maps now, six more as downloadable content), *Modern Warfare* is an unabashed love letter to *COD's* hardcore fans, retaining the original's storyline, mechanics and even sense of movement, while jacking the visuals up for 4K screens. It looks fantastic, but playing it highlights how much the series has evolved in the last decade — this feels slower and more punishing than *Infinite's* lightning-fast sci-fi shootouts.

And that seems to be the biggest problem with the package as a whole — *Infinite Warfare* wants to move the series forward, but can't quite let go of the past. **MATT KAMEN**

**VERDICT** A diverse package with plenty to offer, *Infinite Warfare* itself delivers a strong single-player experience and solid multiplayer, but still feels overshadowed by *COD's* past glories.



## THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM — SPECIAL EDITION



OUT NOW / PC, PS4, XBOX ONE

DIRECTOR Todd Howard

CAST Max von Sydow, Christopher Plummer, Joan Allen, Michael Hogan, Vladimir Kulich

**WELCOME TO SKYRIM.** Or, more likely, welcome *back* to Skyrim, the world of *The Elder Scrolls V*, which sold 20 million copies when it was released five years ago. This is a remastered version, with better lighting, textures, physics and all the downloadable content now included. Also, for the first time on consoles, there are mods. The original is a classic of the previous generation and, while its age is starting to show, the world still instils a sense of awe and a yearning need to explore it. It's the best version of the game available. Clear 500 hours from your diary — you're going to need them. **JP**



## WATCH DOGS 2



OUT NOW / PC, PS4, XBOX ONE

DIRECTORS Jonathan Morin, Danny Bélanger

CAST Ruffin Prentiss, Tasya Teles

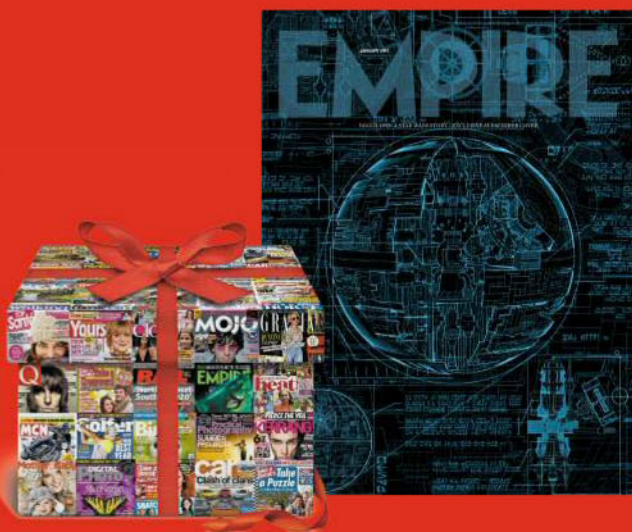
**VIDEO GAMES AREN'T** strangers to sequels that substantially improve on the moderate successes of their predecessors, and *Watch Dogs* has come back immeasurably brighter on its second serving. Ubisoft's new open-worlder is a different beast from 2014's dour original: grey Chicago is now sun-kissed San Francisco (you'll lose an hour taking selfies at tourist hotspots), and generic, growly protagonist Aiden Pearce from the first film has given way to the genuinely likeable, not to mention gymnastic, anarcho-nerd Marcus Holloway (Prentiss). Hackers are the game's heroes, but the techno-lingo is relatable for coding casuals — and while the story turns dark very quickly, the dialogue unfolds with warm humour. In a sea of so-so substitutes, this is the *Grand Theft Auto*-alike your next week off is looking for. **MD**



# EMPIRE

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NO JEDI

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NO LIGHTSABERS

NO HOPE?

**ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY**, THE FRANCHISE'S FIRST STAND-ALONE INSTALMENT, SENDS A SQUAD ON AN IMPOSSIBLE MISSION, AND IS *STAR WARS'* BIGGEST CHANGE-UP YET

WORDS DAN JOLIN





## WE'RE IN THE THICKEST PART

of the nuttiest time of the show," says John Knoll with a weary chuckle. "Full factory mode." It's late October and *Rogue One*, the fourth *Star Wars* movie that the veteran ILM visual-effects supervisor has worked on (unless you count the 1997 Special Editions), isn't going to bed without a fight. This is often how it is with big-studio blockbusters in post-production, lightspeeding to meet their release-date deadlines. Always more chunks of data to crunch, always further finessing to be done on photo-real CG shots. But *Rogue One* has proven a pricklier beast than most. It's not been easy for Knoll, and his exhaustion is evident in the weighty sighs that punctuate our conversation.

Yet this is also, he insists, his favourite part of the process. "The results of years of planning, meetings and design work finally come together,

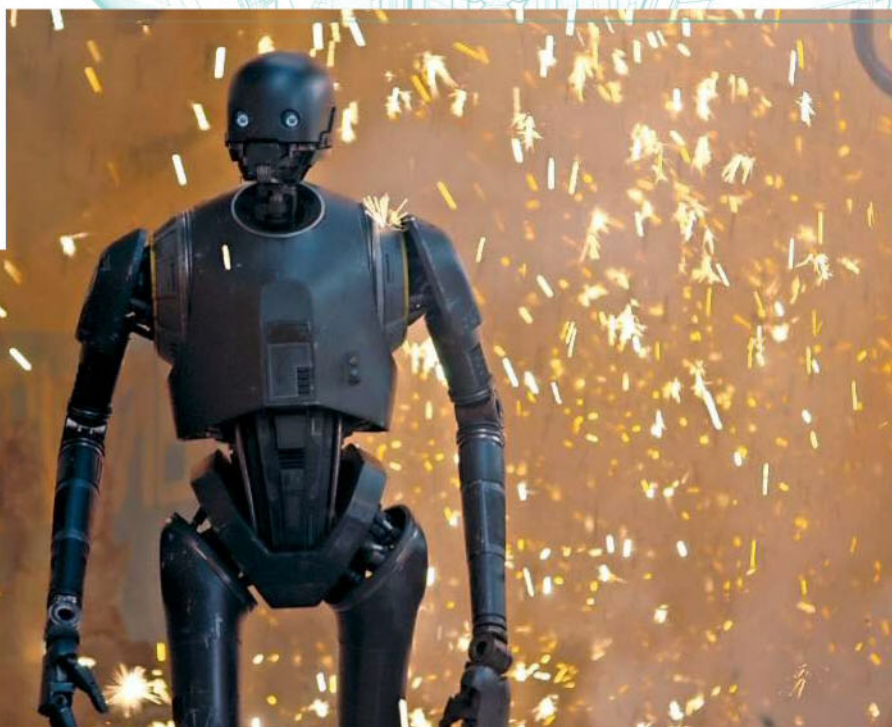
and the shots are looking great. Always very energising and exciting to see." Plus, for Knoll, there's an additional, especially satisfying layer of gratification to this end-game phase — one which not so many VFX supervisors get to feel. "*Rogue One* is something that's sprung from my imagination," he says. "So that's fun."

Back in the summer of 2003, Knoll was in Sydney working with George Lucas and producer Rick McCallum on *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*. As Lucas orchestrated Anakin's fall, midwifed the birth of the Skywalker twins and teased a first-glimpse holo-plan of a moon-sized Imperial WMD, Knoll's mind tractor-beamed back to *Episode IV*'s yellow-fonted opening crawl. One line kept nagging at him: "During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the DEATH STAR." It struck him as a fantastic untold story,





**Above left:** Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn) surveys his technological terror. **Above:** Jyn's father Galen (Mads Mikkelsen). **Above right:** Pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed) in a spot of bother. **Here:** Sparks fly around droid K-2SO (Alan Tudyk).



and he wondered if it might be a good fit for the *Star Wars* TV show he knew Lucas and McCallum were then developing.

After an exploratory chat with McCallum, it turned out it wasn't. So the concept went dormant for nine-and-a-half years. In late 2012, when Kathleen Kennedy was appointed Lucasfilm president, she announced that, in addition to the continuation of the Skywalker saga, there would be a new strand of stand-alone *Star Wars* movies. The next year, encouraged by friends to whom he had mentioned the idea, Knoll plucked up courage and booked a meeting with Kennedy and Lucasfilm's 'Head Of Story' Kiri Hart. Then, over 45 minutes, he laid out his vision: "A sort of *Mission: Impossible*-style break-in to the most secure facility of the Empire to steal the Death Star plans." It had some *Zero Dark Thirty* in there, some *Guns Of Navarone*, some *Ocean's Eleven*.

He detailed how it would focus on all-new characters, while also allowing a certain, wheezy Dark Lord of the Sith to return to our screens. Kennedy was impressed. She'd already been discussing concepts for non-saga stories with the now-retired Lucas, but here was one that was, she says, "more concrete and solid" than any other. So she pulled the trigger. And, as Knoll puts it, "It gradually snowballed into what we have today."

The original idea was that the *Star Wars* Stories would be "smaller, scrappier, lower-budget" than the Episodes. But *Rogue One* grew in the telling. "It got more and more epic," Knoll says. Not that it would lose its 'scrappy' spirit. Not if Gareth Edwards, British director of the micro-budget *Monsters* (2010) and mega-scaled *Godzilla* (2014), had anything to do with it. "Gareth has this almost documentary vérité style and it's great to see how that works

in the *Star Wars* universe," says Knoll. "It gives it all a very real feel."

**MAKING *ROGUE ONE* FELT ALMOST** too real for Felicity Jones. "A seven-month shoot, six-day weeks and intensive training," is how the Birmingham-born actor sums up her tenure as the movie's heroine, Jyn Erso. When she wasn't evading stormtroopers on Maldives beaches or thwacking bad guys with combat batons, she spent a lot of her time nursing chafed limbs. "My family would be like, 'Are you okay? Is there anything we should do?'" she laughs. "I'd just say, 'I'm fine, it's just another day on set, don't worry about it.' It was hugely demanding. But such an adventure."

Her co-star Diego Luna concurs. As Rebel intelligence officer Cassian Andor, who chaperones Jyn on her perilous search for her >





Above left: Forest Whitaker as extreme Rebel Saw Gerrera. Above: Is that Krennic's shuttle coming in to land? Left: Platoon leader Pao. Here: Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) at the Rebels' base.

Death Star-designing father (Mads Mikkelsen), and heads up the film's diverse, plans-heisting team, he matched her bruise for bruise. "We were always dirty and wounded," he recalls. "There was not much to imagine there. The guns we were holding were very heavy. Things were exploding in front of us... It was just insane."

Even Alan Tudyk, who plays reprogrammed Imperial droid K-2SO, an entirely digital character, felt the heat of the war zone. Literally. At the end of the shoot, John Knoll asked if there was anything he'd advise them to change about the motion-capture suit he'd been wearing for the past half year. There was one thing, replied Tudyk. He pointed out two places on the fractal-decorated unitard where flying sparks from the production's pyrotechnic effects had smoldered through to his skin. "These suits need to be fire-proof."

The bumps, bruises and minor burns were necessary to creating the unique tone of this *Star Wars* adventure. *Rogue One* presents a galaxy bereft of Jedi, its inhabitants distanced from the Force. Some, like blind warrior-monk Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen), may emulate the Jedi, but they can't move things with their minds. The industrial crackle and hum of lightsaber duels has long-since fallen silent. For some filmmakers, the forced absence of these none-more-*Star Wars* elements might represent a curse. But Knoll insists it's a gift.

"Part of the appeal of the story is that this is a dark time when people are fighting and dying and engaging in acts of bravery without the benefit of Force powers," he muses. "These are ordinary people who feel they have to do something about the evil that's happening in the universe." Edwards agrees, arguing *Rogue One's* heroes are much

more accessible: "There's not gonna be any magical solution," he says. "They have to solve it themselves. The film's about people I can relate to."

People such as Riz Ahmed's character, which the director feels is closest to himself, being the hero who's always saying, "This is all crazy! What am I doing here?" Bodhi Rook is a former Imperial cargo pilot whose homeworld, Jeddah (a kind of Mecca to Jedi disciples like Chirrut), has become occupied territory. "He's just a guy," says Ahmed. "An everyman who finds himself thrust into the middle of historic events. He's someone who is disconcerted by what they're up against. It makes his decisions and choices much braver."

Even the chief villain played by Ben Mendelsohn, Director Orson Krennic, has his jackboots planted firmly on the ground. "The Empire's a little bit like the BBC," half-jokes Edwards, "in that it's very Oxbridge. And Ben





## THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF DARTH VADER

OTHER NOTABLE NON-EPISEODE APPEARANCES BY THE SITH LORD

### SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE (1978)

Alan Dean Foster's novel follow-up to *Star Wars*, in which Luke and Leia battle Vader for a powerful crystal on a swampy planet named Mimban. He lightsaber-duels both heroes, but it's Luke who beats the looming villain, cutting off his arm and sending him tumbling down a pit.

### PLANET OF KADRI (1980)

This *Los Angeles Times* comic-strip sees Lord Vader developing a poisonous gas named "pacifog"; by putting "kunda crystals" in his stormtroopers' breathing filters, he makes them immune. His chemical warfare plan goes awry, though, when Luke, Han and co find a "vibro-crystal" which shatters the kundas. Curse those pesky Rebels.

### SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE (1996)

Though it was Lucasfilm's own multimedia expansion, set before *Return Of The Jedi*, *Shadows Of The Empire* is now considered non-canon. The video game, comic and novel all feature Vader squaring off against a green-faced rival named Prince Xizor, boss of space-Mafia group Black Sun.

### VADER'S QUEST (1999)

Dark Horse Comics' four-issue miniseries picks up immediately after *A New Hope*'s explosive ending, with Vader trying to track down the young pilot who destroyed the Death Star, torturing and killing people along the way. For a while he has a bird-man lackey named Ban Papeega, who dresses like someone from Tudor times.

### STAR WARS INFINITIES (2001)

This four-part comic series presents a series of 'what if' scenarios for the original trilogy. So 'A New Hope' sees the Death Star undestroyed, Leia captured and Vader training her up to be a Sith Lady; while 'Return Of The Jedi' concludes with Vader surviving and turning good, with natty all-white helmet and robes.

wanted to embrace the fact Krennic had more of a working-class route through the Empire." Mendelsohn describes the Advanced Weapons Research head as "a man that's made his way up the chain through his ability to operate within the power struggles of the Empire". Power struggles, he hints, that will place him in opposition to the Sith Lord formerly known as Anakin. "It's fair to say Lord Vader and he aren't friendly. Darth is very much about the Force. Krennic is about *force*. Not really down with the whole mystical thing."

So Edwards' approach, with its emphasis on handheld camera-work, real-world locations and practical effects, isn't just fancy-pants posturing. Or a way to torture his actors. "Gareth created a sense of emotional immediacy," says Forest Whitaker, who plays "war-torn veteran" Saw Gerrera (a supporting character lifted from the

*Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animated series). It's an approach, he tells *Empire*, "that lends itself to a realistic depiction of war."

If you want to effectively show a galaxy where ordinary people face vast odds without the protection of superpowered knights, you have to make it as visceral as possible. Even if that means jumping down into the trenches with them.

## "THE WHOLE METHODOLOGY WITH

*Rogue One*," says Felicity Jones, "was to keep it very naturalistic. Gareth often holds the camera himself because he wants to be there with you. With Gareth we felt like we were all in it together."

Every day, Jiang Wen had to lumber about in a cumbersome battle-suit as cynical rebel warrior Baze Malbus. Even in difficult conditions, such >





as the sucking, wet sand of the Maldives' Laamu Atoll. So he in particular felt for his director. "He shoots like he's a character among us," the Chinese actor says. "He held the camera all day, and that thing's heavy. And you realise he's tired. But I can tell he has a very big passion inside. Because he still carried that thing the whole day, from beginning to end."

Getting down and dirty with the cast was, says Edwards often "stressful", and something of a gamble on a film like this, but the rewards always outweighed the risks. "If you play it safe you're not going to do anything new or different. You have to take risks. It's the bit that excites me. At the end of the day, people don't watch a spreadsheet, they watch a movie. It should be about what gets in front of the camera."

*Empire's* conversations with the people who fought on the front lines of this gritty mission

movie are replete with tales of impressive but challenging locations (Jordan and Iceland in addition to the Maldives), but what most impressed them was the way Edwards allowed them to find nuanced, convincing character moments within each scene.

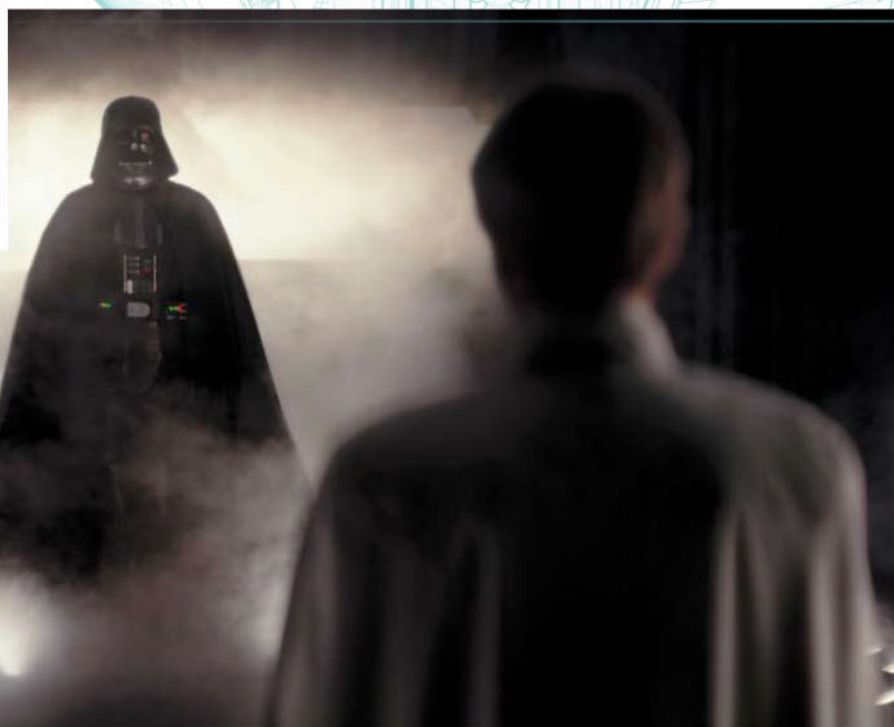
The sets were built in 360 degrees, rather than small segments, so Edwards' camera was free to point and rove in any direction. Director of photography Greig Fraser would light scenes using in-camera sources, so there was no chance of crew equipment getting into shot. Extras, even those encased in Neal Scanlan's lovably bizarre alien or robot costumes, were asked to sustain their background performances over extended periods rather than in short bursts. "Everyone was existing and living in these environments," explains Edwards. "I wanted to make it feel like a real world."

Hong Kong martial-arts hero Donnie Yen has more experience than most on elaborate, large-scale movies, but even he was astonished by the immersive environments. "I have never been on sets with so much resource," he says. "There were scenes where I'm inside this cargo ship and we had this hydraulic mechanism to rock it, and 360-degree bluescreen around it to project footage of us flying through space. Oh my goodness. It gives you that sense of actually flying in space without having to act like it."

Luna describes how every lever in that ship's cockpit could be manipulated, how every button and screen emitted light or gave a reaction to your touch — even if it was never destined to be in shot. It was so enjoyable, he tells us, "I would be hoping someone fucks up so we can do one more take!"

There was, however, a downside to Edwards' guerrilla process; producer Kathleen Kennedy





**Left:** Death troopers defend the beaches of Scarif. **Above right:** Baze Malbus (Jiang Weng) and Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen). **Above:** Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) takes aim. **Right:** Darth Vader checks in with Krennic.

certainly sensed some frustration from him. “Crafting it through the lens is very much a product of his style,” she says, “but it’s very, very hard to do inside these giant movies where you have to plan everything. Finding that balance for Gareth was tough.”

It is also one of the reasons why John Knoll’s brainchild is giving him such a headache now, during these final stages. Because Edwards doesn’t block his scenes out ahead of shooting, instead allowing the actors to find and hit their own marks while the cameras roll, “that can make it a little harder to make sure you have bluescreens in the right places”. Sometimes Knoll would just have to say, “Okay, we shot it, but there weren’t any tracking marks [to indicate where VFX elements would go]. Well... We’ll figure it out, I guess.” So, he admits, “It’s been a little harder in post.” But there is an all-important upside. “You

do get that spontaneity in-camera that outweighs those concerns. In the end, the results are better.”

## WHETHER THOSE RESULTS ARE STRONG

enough to earn Edwards and his feisty band of freedom fighters another mission is a moot point. Kennedy is insistent that this story, crammed as it is into a very specific chronological nook, is a one-off. There will be no *Rogue Two*.

“I think that’s what makes it exciting. You can just drop into *Rogue One* and not feel like you’re being pulled along into something you need to make a commitment to. It means anything can happen.” There is a real sense of jeopardy for this Death Star-defying gang; high stakes might very well mean a high body count, with no Force-ghost comebacks to alleviate the grief.

“It’s meant to be its own thing,” Knoll affirms. Although... “I have thought of something we could do if there was interest in doing another one in the same vein. But nothing I’m ready to talk about.” Edwards, however, says he’s heard different.

“I can tell you something,” he says, leaning in conspiratorially to give *Empire* the scoop. “I’m not sure if this is gonna happen, but apparently they’re considering doing a sequel where you’ll find out what the Rebel Alliance did with the plans. Potentially it’ll be directed by George Lucas, and you’ll maybe see the result where they...” he drops his voice, “*blow up* the Death Star.” He leans back, grinning, joke-torpedo launched. “I think they’re still in negotiations. But, I mean, they have a lot to live up to.”

**ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY IS IN CINEMAS FROM 15 DECEMBER**



Max Landis, photographed  
exclusively for *Empire* in  
Sherman Oaks, California,  
on 29 September 2016.







THE FUTURE OF  
HOLLYWOOD? OR A  
BRAT WHO'S LUCKED  
OUT? PROLIFIC,  
HYPERACTIVE  
WUNDERKIND  
SCREENWRITER  
**MAX LANDIS**  
WELCOMES US INTO  
HIS WORLD

WORDS OLLY RICHARDS PHOTOGRAPHY ART STREIBER





Max Landis cannot walk into a room unnoticed. The LA house in which *Empire* meets him couldn't be more Hollywood if Jerry Bruckheimer were standing in the middle of it smoking a stogie: there's glass everywhere, white walls, a glittering pool, valley views and furniture that may actually be sculpture. But from the second Landis strides in — well over six feet tall, dressed like a cartoon on a date, half his hair shaved and the rest rainbow-streaked, carrying a little white dog he found on the way in — he pulls focus from everything else, including the dog. “DOES THIS BELONG TO ANYONE?” he enquires, in a voice that will prove not to have an indoor setting. You might guess he was an actor, a stylist or possibly a very young agent. You probably wouldn't land on writer. Yet Max Landis is currently the biggest noise in screenwriting in Hollywood, and he's adored and reviled in equal measure.

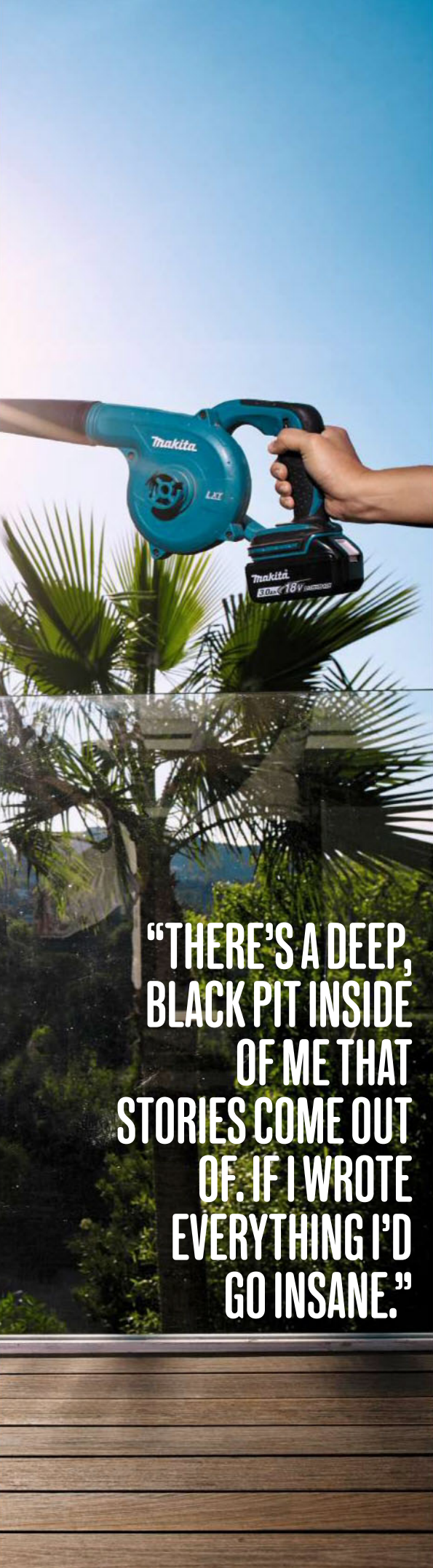
Even if you're not familiar with him, you'll know at least one of his projects. Landis has only five released films to his name — *Chronicle*, *Me Him Her*, *American Ultra*, *Mr. Right* and *Victor Frankenstein* — but he reckons there are “14 or so” others in various stages of development. He recently sold an original script, supernatural cop thriller *Bright*, with David Ayer, Will Smith and Joel Edgerton attached, to Netflix for \$3 million, a sum unheard of since the '90s heyday of Shane Black. He's currently showrunning his first series, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*. This is not to mention the countless other screenplays stuffing up his hard drive. Yet beyond his ubiquity as a writer and his famous surname — he's the son of John Landis, director of *An American Werewolf In London* (a film Max is preparing to remake) — what's got him noticed is his personality, particularly when he throws around criticism of other people's movies on his Twitter account, @uptomyknees. The offspring of a Hollywood big shot, contrarian, rich and only 31: you can understand why some dislike him.

In person, though, Landis is much gentler than you might imagine. He's certainly loud, but he's friendly. More impassioned than obnoxious. As soon as he sits down he is off, talking a mile a minute and picking at the industry that made him rich. He is immediately, delightfully dramatic.

“I exist in a state of constant creative frustration,” he says, leaping cross-legged onto a sofa overlooking the pool. “There's a deep, black pit inside of me that stories come out of and I get so excited about them. I think, ‘This will be the one. *This will be the one.*’”







"THERE'S A DEEP,  
BLACK PIT INSIDE  
OF ME THAT  
STORIES COME OUT  
OF. IF I WROTE  
EVERYTHING I'D  
GO INSANE."

## WHEN MAX LANDIS

was nine, he watched a Ray Harryhausen movie with his father. "It was *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*," he remembers. "The cyclops came out onto the beach and I was mesmerised. I asked my dad, 'That's not real. How did they do that?' He explained it was an effect and described the whole process: the animator is told what to do by the director, who learns from the script. I thought, 'Someone wrote on paper that there should be a cyclops and now I'm watching it attack Sinbad in a way that's as real as can be. I want to do that.'"

And he did. He'd been writing for years already, completing his first story, an adventure about two dogs called Yelp and Dopey, at the age of four. Shortly after his 15th birthday, he started writing scripts. Rarely allowed to visit his dad's sets — "due to being extremely badly behaved" — he still got encouragement from both parents, his mother being costume designer Deborah Nadoolman Landis, the creator of Indiana Jones' look. There was plenty of non-encouragement too. "My dad is a very big critic of mine," Landis says. "He would read my early work and be like, 'These scripts are terrible!' He doesn't have much of a filter. He respects me and loves me, but his taste is very different from mine."

*Empire* posits that perhaps one reason he's written all these scripts is to win approval from Landis Sr. "No!" he laughs, giving our bargain-bin psychoanalysis short shrift. "He's my dad. He loves me. If he says it's bad it hurts my feelings, but if he loves it — he's my dad! You know what felt good? When Stephen King tweeted that he loved *American Ultra*. That felt amazing."

Although Landis first got into the industry via his father — John Landis knew a high-powered agent called David Kopple, who looked at Max's work and liked it — he's long since brushed off accusations of nepotism. As he says, nobody throws millions of dollars behind you because your dad was big in the '80s. Certainly not more than once. "Everyone talks shit," he says, rising up in his seat. "There are so many people convinced I'm filling some sort of spot that they should have. There's so much jealousy and anger and they have all these excuses that fall apart in the light of reality. If you want to be me, write three easy-to-read, commercial scripts per year. Not scripts that your agent says everyone passed on."

Three scripts per year would actually be slow-going for Landis. He has written somewhere close to 100 screenplays, selling his first at the age of 18, a *Masters Of Horror* episode called 'Deer Woman', on which he collaborated with his father. He sold *Chronicle*, a gritty reinvention of superhero tales that went on to make \$126 million from a \$12 million budget, by the time he was 26. (He's now the grand old age of 31.) He used to write something on every idea he had, but says he now has so

many — he came up with a movie and a TV show on the drive to his *Empire* shoot — that, "If I wrote everything I would go insane." There is no real connective tissue between his projects, no overarching theme, except that none of them sound immediately like anything else.

"I look for holes," Landis explains. "There's not a movie like *Bright* that exists. There wasn't a movie like *American Ultra*, I don't think. There wasn't really a movie like *Chronicle*. They're a focused attack on making movies that have not been made yet." Unashamedly commercial, he wrote a draft for the upcoming *Power Rangers* reboot that went unused (he noted on Twitter after seeing the trailer that "five or so writers later, it appears they made *Chronicle*"). And he's developing a *Pepé Le Pew* movie for Warner Bros., a new adventure for the relentlessly amorous cartoon skunk which he pitches as "a family adventure about emotional intimacy... *Pepé* wants the cat until he gets her; then he runs away".

An ideas machine, he's not afraid to publicly aim his imagination at other people's films. To his 82,000 Twitter followers he has, at length, expressed his immense disappointment with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* ("A BORING AND THINLY WRITTEN PIECE OF FAN FICTION NOTHINGNESS") and the new *Ghostbusters* ("3rd act gets really horribly dumb. Racist stereotype character is as advertised"). As much as he's oddly, noisily, charming in person, in 140 characters he can read as brusque and arrogant. He's the mouthy nerd with a platform, and that's not often a popular thing to be. "Did you know that being an obnoxious douchebag could be a profession? It can be, and Max Landis was just paid \$3 million for it," sniped a typical attacker on movie site Pajiba in March.

"I've never tried to be famous," he protests. "The conversations I have on Twitter are the same ones I had in the back of a comic-book store when I was 14," he says. "It's never a deliberate 'hot take' on anything — it's just a direct filter into my brain. It's got me in trouble and weirdly has helped me in other ways. It's easy to get knocked over by negativity, but if I can entertain people and inspire them, then why should I not? There's only so much I'm willing to be punished for being myself."

For all this, that line about not wanting to be famous doesn't quite ring true. After all, Landis could do his job just as effectively without being a Twitter star or engaging in arguments on Facebook. But he disagrees vehemently that these are the actions of a man who wants to be seen. "I've never had a publicist. I've never paid anyone to advertise for me," he says firmly. "You guys are the ones that contacted me. I didn't ask for that. I said yes to it because I'm not averse to fame. I'm not averse to attention, but at the end of the day, I just am who I am. And this is what happens."





**WHAT HE ISN'T** really yet, for all his success on paper, is a hit-maker. The same thing that annoys Landis' critics is the same thing that annoys Landis: thus far, most of the movies made from his scripts have not been very successful. *Chronicle* may have been a huge winner, but the rest have disappointed, critically and commercially. He knows this. Yet he keeps getting hired.

"People say, 'How does he keep getting movies?'" Landis says, his voice swelling to a shout, which it does whenever he's particularly happy or irked. "Part of the lie is that I'm the force behind these movies. I'm the *writer*. There are plenty of bad scripts that become okay movies and there are many more good scripts that become terrible movies. Nobody knows how

the system works unless they work in it."

Once his scripts have been sold, Landis says, his power over them has tended to disappear. "They're buying a blueprint... I have no control. It can rain on the wrong day of the schedule and the most important scene in your script is irrevocably changed. An actor can say they don't like a line on set or does a bad job of reading the most important line. There is no control." He's warming to his theme. "You remember that Russell Crowe Robin Hood movie? Without commenting on its quality, that started out in development as a script about the Sheriff Of Nottingham, which was *great*. Nine drafts later, it's a historically accurate Robin Hood."

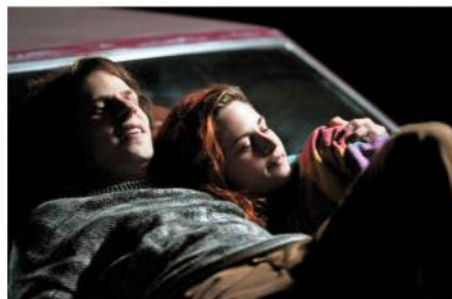
Next year's *Bright*, set in a world where humans rub shoulders with monsters and fairies, is the most high-profile project of Landis' career







Below, top to bottom: Jesse Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart in *American Ultra*; Landis' biggest hit, *Chronicle*; James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe in *Victor Frankenstein*. Below left: Elijah Wood and Samuel Barnett, co-stars of *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*.



ALAMY, GETTY, REX FEATURES

to date. His script provoked a bidding battle which Netflix won: the streaming titan has committed an incredible \$90 million to making it. Will Smith stars as a law-enforcement officer teamed with an orc played by Joel Edgerton; *Suicide Squad*'s David Ayer directs. Yet Landis sounds a little glum as he brings us up to speed on it. "It won't be the movie I wrote," he says. "That was about brotherhood and friendship and masculine sensitivity. It's moved away from that a bit." To become what? "I don't know yet." He takes several calls about the movie during our conversation, one rather terse, but makes a point of saying that Ayer is a "genius".

According to Landis, though, his days of being pushed around are numbered. He singles out 2015's *Victor Frankenstein* as the tipping point. The original script had more backstory for Igor, a more comic tone and an ending that dealt with the possibilities of Frankenstein's experiment. The version that hit screens, however, was a standard monster mash-up that was critically lambasted, eliciting lines like, "Worst film of the year? Possibly. Worst *Frankenstein* adaptation ever? Definitely." (*The Times*) "The film is very different from what I wrote," protests Landis. "[Fox] wouldn't let me see it until it was finished. I can guess why." He has decided now that it's no longer enough to be successful financially: he wants to be proud of his work. "I became militant," he says. "The way I talk to my agents and manager has changed. I told them I wouldn't draw within the lines anymore, because it hasn't worked out well for me once."

This is part of the reason he's taken the reins on *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, an Elijah Wood-starring adaptation of Douglas Adams' book series about a psychic investigator. The series, however it turns out, will be mostly his vision. "*Dirk Gently* has been extremely creatively fulfilling, if physically and mentally exhausting," he says. "It's so labyrinthine and ridiculous and unique in tone, that if there was someone in charge who didn't want to do the best possible job and control the production decisions, it would wind up being a diluted version of what it needed to be."

And then there's the project after, the one that could be different, the one that could be entirely his, the one that could be *the one*. Called *Deeper*, it's about a former astronaut (set to be played by Bradley Cooper) who is hired to explore the most remote depths of the ocean. There he'll find something mind-blowing. Hopefully not *Pépé Le Pew*.

"That *will* be the movie I wrote, because I have more control over it," Landis declares. Even if it's not, there are a million more ideas where that one came from. He'll keep going until one of them is exactly as he imagined it. Until he reaches the bottom of that deep black pit. 🍌

**DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY**  
IS ON NETFLIX FROM 11 DECEMBER



## TYPE A's

FIVE MORE RED-HOT  
SCREENWRITERS UNDER 40



### NICOLE PERLMAN

She started at Marvel, working on *Thor* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. Now she's toggling between Final Draft files for *Captain Marvel*, a Pokémon film and Robert Downey Jr's *Sherlock Holmes 3*.



### STEPHANY FOLSOM

After making it onto the Black List in 2013 with *1969: A Space Odyssey, Or How Kubrick Learned To Stop Worrying And Land On The Moon*, she was hired by Marvel to polish *Thor: Ragnarok*.



### GRAHAM MOORE

He won an Oscar for *The Imitation Game*, dedicating it to "that kid out there who feels like she's weird or she's different". His next film is *The Last Days Of Night*, about the battle in 1888 for US electricity.



### KRYSTY WILSON-CAIRNS

Born in Glasgow, she cut her teeth on *Penny Dreadful* and is now writing features, including thriller *The Voyeur's Motel* for Sam Mendes and crime drama *The Good Nurse* for Darren Aronofsky.



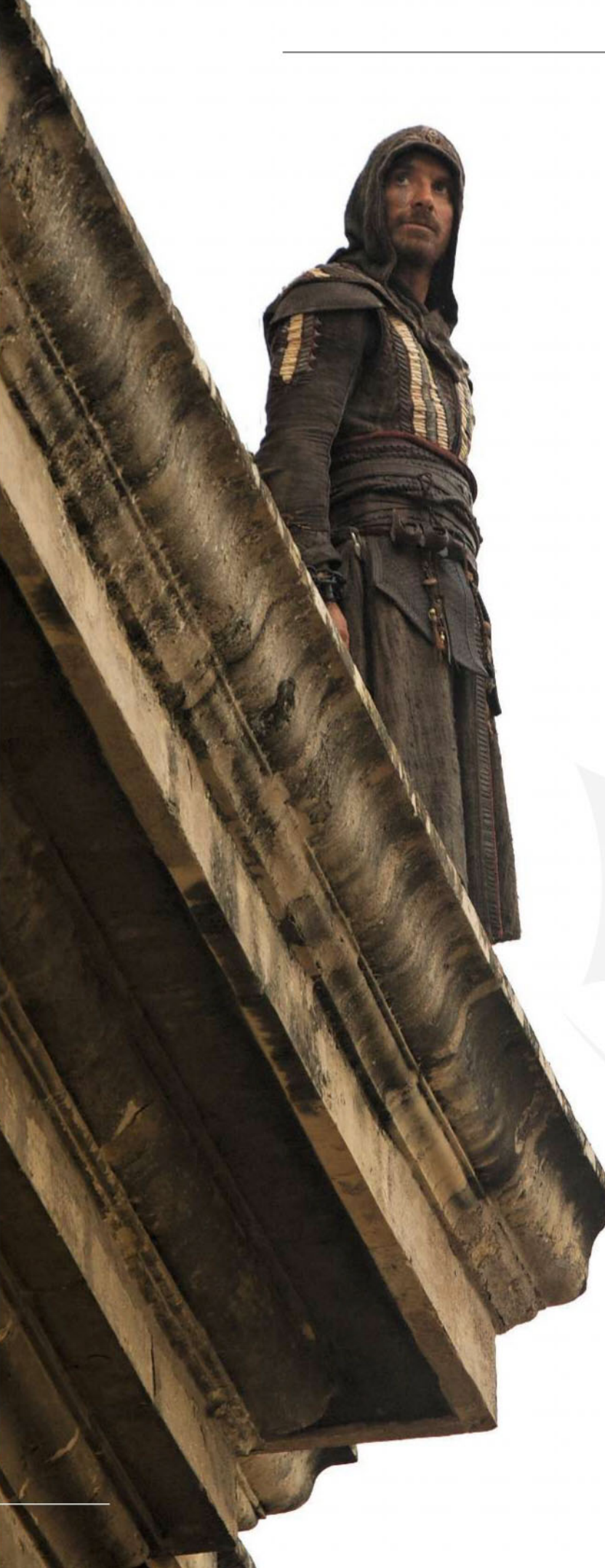
### JOE ROBERT COLE

His alien-invasion movie *Revok* remains in development hell, but it's doubtful Cole frets much given he's since worked on *The People V. O.J. Simpson* and is co-writing *Black Panther* with Ryan Coogler.









# ADAPT OR DIE

MICHAEL FASSBENDER AND JUSTIN KURZEL, THE DUO BEHIND ASSASSIN'S CREED, THINK THEY'VE FINALLY FOUND THE SECRET TO A GREAT VIDEO-GAME ADAPTATION: TREAT IT LIKE SHAKESPEARE

WORDS NEV PIERCE



# JUSTIN KURZEL HAS DONE HIS BACK IN.

Damaged a disc. It's October 2016, and the 42-year-old Australian behind last year's acclaimed take on *Macbeth* is deep into post-production on his follow-up, a project so intense it has led to him popping painkillers. The film that is demanding such fearsome dedication? Well, it's not a fresh spin on *The Tempest*. Instead, it's an adaptation of a video-game franchise about a parkouring hitman: *Assassin's Creed*. The Ubisoft series has sold 93 million copies and counting. It blends science-fiction with historical fact, engulfing you in a worldwide conspiracy while allowing you to jump off tall buildings and skewer enemies with wrist-mounted blades. And this big-screen version has a lot riding on it. Not only do all involved hope it will be a franchise-launcher; if it works it'll also be the first film based on a video game to, well, not suck.

"You want to have the DNA of the game experience," says the quietly spoken, thoughtful Kurzel of his new film, as he sips a Coke in the air-conditioned environs of a London hotel. "But you want it to feel like a piece of cinema. You want to feel, 'This is real. This existed.'"

Which is all very admirable, but this still isn't really what you'd expect from a director steeped in Shakespeare, or from someone who made his big-screen debut with intensely disturbing Australian serial-killer true story *Snowtown*. Except, well... while you can be sure *Assassin's Creed* will be a good deal more fun, it too deals in intriguing ideas of destiny, character and the history of violence. It's all in the blood.

**"THIS IS TAME** as fuck!" Kurzel steps out from behind the monitor, towards the camera crew. It's September 2015 and we're in Valletta, the capital of Malta. He doesn't actually sound cross, but his point is plain: he wants the angry mob crowding in on our heroes to be more, well, fucking angry. "Get the burliest men — no women — trying to get them," he instructs the assistant director. "Chaos!"

Like its source, *Assassin's Creed* starts in the present before jumping back into the past, and a major chunk of the shoot has taken place in sleek, ultra-modern laboratories. Today, however, is dedicated to one of the "regressions" that main character Callum Lynch (Michael Fassbender) makes, as he's thrown back via

genetic-memory technology (not a real thing) into the body of his 15th-century ancestor, Aguilar — a member of the titular organisation battling to preserve humanity's free will. Right now he and fellow fighter Maria (Ariane Labed) are about to be burnt at the stake, with peasants in thrall to religious fundamentalism crowding in, delirious at their demise. Crosses are brandished and grotesque masks worn, like a Hieronymus Bosch painting come to life.

Costume designer Sammy Sheldon has had to provide for 900 people today — rather than relying on CG crowd-replication, the turmoil is being mounted full-scale. "We looked at crowds in riots and times of war," she says. "The way they paint themselves. The tribal nature of human beings." The film may be a sci-fi fantasy, but if its head is in the clouds, its feet are on the ground: the spectacle looks grubby, painful, authentic. Fassbender — face tattooed as Aguilar, his lean frame turned sinewy by training — seems tired. A little loose skin flaps from a cut on his hand. He says Kurzel and director of photography Adam Arkapaw are a "formidable force", working fast, dedicated to doing as much of the action on set as possible. The director, between takes, shows *Empire* a rough cut of a chase sequence they shot earlier this week. "You've got knives, swords, an arrow off the wall," he points out, as we watch Fassbender and Labed move at a frenetic pace, dodging assailants and weapons. "It takes so long to do all this stuff in real locations with real action."

Kurzel has been studying the action sequences of David Lean's *Lawrence Of Arabia*, inspired by their authenticity. "That kind of in-camera stunt work is just extraordinary. Hopefully that's something that comes through in the film — that it feels old-school and you can feel we've gone out there and given a fuck." Fassbender agrees, even if his body sometimes







Callum Lynch (Michael Fassbender), aka Assassin Aguilar, is out for blood. **Below:** Director Justin Kurzel shows Fassbender his best moves. **Bottom:** Abstergo Industries' Dr Sophia Rikkin (Marion Cotillard). **Bottom left:** Fassbender reaches new heights.



regrets the dedication. "We've got the Leap Of Faith happening at 125 feet, without any wires," he says, referring to the game's trademark plunge, which sees the protagonist high-dive from vertiginous peaks. While his stunt double, Damien Walters, performed the main-event jump, Fassbender himself has done plenty of 20-foot plummets. "We want to stay away from CGI as much as possible. That's important to us."

**THE FILM'S SHAPE** and form is largely due to Fassbender. "It's very much Michael's film," states Michael Lesslie, the first writer to come on board. "He knows what he wants and that's invaluable on something of this scale." When game-maker Ubisoft approached the star in 2011, he came on not only as assassin but producer, nurturing the project for five years. While Kurzel and Fassbender worked together on *Macbeth*, the director "kept hearing bits

and pieces of this crazy script Mike was working on". It wasn't until Fassbender extended a formal invitation that Kurzel sat down to read the full thing. "It had a story and concept and ideas that felt extremely sophisticated to me," he remembers. "I was deeply surprised that I could connect to a game called *Assassin's Creed*."

Lesslie describes the Fassbender and Kurzel collaboration as like "two big dogs going at it" — interrogating the story and the material, figuring out the best iteration. "Basically I just annoy Justin more!" laughs Fassbender of the way the process has changed, now he's a force behind the camera as well as in front of it. "It's just a different beast, you know? We worked on the script together and now, in post, it's a longer journey. But the language remains the same, in terms of how he speaks to me." Marion Cotillard, yet another player from *Macbeth* cast in *Assassin's Creed* as the mysterious Dr Sophia Rikkin, says she could feel Fassbender had a different level >



of involvement. "It was really impressive to see him in that different context. Michael was full of ideas and creating things with Justin on set."

Video-game adaptations are notoriously difficult to pull off: most have floundered both at the box-office and on RottenTomatoes.com. Lesslie reckons the problem is usually misplaced loyalty. "Sometimes adaptations have been too loyal to the mechanism at the heart of video games, where the protagonist has to be a cipher for the player." Here, the decision was taken to create a new character for the film — operating within the universe of the games, but not beholden to established canon. Callum Lynch is a ne'er-do-well adrift after a traumatic childhood, scheduled to be executed, who finds himself imprisoned by mysterious corporation Abstergo. He is then sent back in time, via a machine called the Animus, to relive the memories of his ancestor. "The idea was that Aguilar is somebody who is part of a family, a creed," says Fassbender. "He's a warrior when we meet him and willing to sacrifice himself for something greater than him. Whereas Cal is a lone wolf. He's cynical. And he's sceptical. And so it's his journey to become something beyond himself where he can feel like he belongs."

With Cal an anti-hero of sorts, the entire movie is coloured with at least 50 shades of grey. "It's not like *Star Wars*, where you've got the light and the dark side," says Fassbender. "This is very ambiguous morally. Both of these parties — the Templars and the Assassins — are hypocritical at certain points. There are not clear-cut good and bad characters. I think it's a little more provocative for an audience to see that. You know, 'Should I be feeling that? Should I be backing this character?' That's always fun."

The Assassins are fighting for freedom. The Templars are trying to control us. It's a theme the film's makers see as extremely pertinent to today's world. As a shadowy figure played by Charlotte Rampling says at one point, "People no longer care about their civil liberties — they care about their standard of life." Fassbender can see that point of view. "Look at the world! People will put up with a lot if they have their television. They will turn a blind eye to a lot. That's definitely what she's saying in that speech. It's like, 'It's all fine: people are dumbed down and numb, just the way we want them.'"

But that wasn't the theme that originally drew the *X-Men* star in. What hooked him was the notion of DNA memory, that our blood can bring with it experiences from our family past. "I wasn't aware of that until I met the guys from Ubisoft," he says. "I thought, 'Wow, scientifically that makes a lot of sense.' Justin says it's a film about belonging — roots and ancestry. It's about what you leave behind for the next generation."

## FASSBENDER, RAISED IN

Ireland but half-German by blood, has his own interesting ancestor: Irish revolutionary and politician Michael Collins. "Well, that's what



"Make some noise, Cleveland!" Below right: Highly skilled assassin and partner to Aguilar Maria (Ariane Labed). Middle: Lynch experiences a glitch. Bottom: CEO of Abstergo Industries and member of the Templar Order Alan Rikkin (Jeremy Irons).

my grandfather maintained. My mother says, 'You have to stop telling people!' because I don't think there's actually any proof..." Kurzel, meanwhile, is most fascinated by his own father: a Pole forced into a World War II labour camp at the age of six. "The family had to go from camp to camp, ostracised from their own country. They had to make their way from Poland into Germany and eventually, I think, came to Italy. Whole families were split up. Some went to America. Some went to London. My side went to Australia."

Given this, it starts to make sense why Kurzel has made *Assassin's Creed*. Family has been much on his mind. His dad died six years ago — the first time he'd experienced such a close loss. "All you have is the memory of them. Then I had daughters and could see my father in them. I was trying to figure out, 'How is this all threaded?' At the end of the day, it's blood. It's a very powerful thing."

The past visiting you in the present — being a presence in your everyday — is very much a literal element within *Assassin's Creed*. In the Animus, we see the ancient action as Lynch's present self interacts with it. It's called the bleeding effect. "Images from your past and your ancestors are having a dialogue with you and interacting with you," says Kurzel, before relating it in a surprising way to his previous production. "When I started reading about that, the bleeding effect, it just felt completely like post-traumatic stress. Some of the soldiers I interviewed for *Macbeth* were dealing with similar things, trying to find peace with these voices. [Also] some of the soldiers who had just come back from Afghanistan or Iraq, suffering from PTSD, had come from a line of soldiers in the family that had experienced Vietnam, that had experienced World War II. Is the experience of that passed on? Might it be passed on within your blood?"





It's an idea that powers the central character in *Assassin's Creed*, who doesn't understand how his life has become so bloody. "What makes him have the impulse to be violent?" Kurzel says. "Well, if you come from a line of assassins who have been in wars through hundreds of years, and he doesn't know about it, that creates a really complicated character! When I first understood that about *Assassin's Creed*, I found it a really heady and interesting concept."

He stands, stretching his damaged back, readying to head back to finish the movie's audio mix and VFX. To paraphrase Macbeth, this tale will be full of sound and fury, but it will signify *something*. "There are really interesting ideas in this film," Kurzel concludes, "that speak to what it is to be a human being." All that, and you get Michael Fassbender stabbing people. 🗡️

**ASSASSIN'S CREED IS IN CINEMAS FROM  
6 JANUARY 2017**



## HIGH TIMES

HOW ASSASSIN'S CREED'S  
'LEAP OF FAITH' COMPARES TO  
OTHER MOVIE PLUNGES

### GOLDENEYE \_ (1995)

Height: 720 feet

**Object jumped from:** Contra Dam

Pierce Brosnan's 007 debut featured this epic drop, performed by Wayne Michaels. Tourists braver than us can replicate his daring, as the Swiss site has been leased to a bungee-jumping business.

### HOOPER \_ (1978)

Height: 230 feet

**Object jumped from:** helicopter

The great A.J. Bakunas set a world record falling from a chopper for this stunt-themed comedy. He died on another jump just months later, making this stunt his legacy.

### ASSASSIN'S CREED \_ (2016)

Height: 125 feet

**Object jumped from:** Seville Cathedral

The video-game series' signature action beat was replicated for real by stunt double Damien Walters, although his jump was from a platform, not a bona fide holy building.

### THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING \_ (1975)

Height: 100 feet

**Object jumped from:** rope bridge

Stuntman Joe Powell plummeted down a ravine for the climax of John Huston's drama. Huston proclaimed it "the darnedest thing I ever saw".

### PROJECT A \_ (1983)

Height: 60 feet

**Object jumped from:** Kowloon Clock Tower Jackie Chan kept delaying the execution of this Harold Lloyd-riffing stunt, but finally plucked up the courage to do it three times. The result: a badly injured spine.



Michael Fassbender,  
photographed  
exclusively for  
*Empire* at Claridge's,  
London, on  
13 October 2016.





# KILLER

# INSTINCTS

FROM PLAYING MR PINK IN A SCHOOL PLAY TO WIELDING BLADES AS THE ULTIMATE ASSASSIN, MICHAEL FASSBENDER REFLECTS ON A CAREER THAT'S NEVER LOST ITS EDGE

WORDS NEV PIERCE    PORTRAITS JOHN RUSSO





**As well as starring in *Assassin's Creed*, you're producing it. Is that a different kind of satisfaction?**

I'll tell you at Christmas! I mean, I enjoy it. It's something that has always interested me, from the beginning when I stumbled upon acting through [theatre guru] Donie Courtney. He was a pupil at my school who went off and studied at the Gaiety School Of Acting. We had no drama class, so it never occurred to me that was an avenue I could go down until he came back [to teach] classes. I joined a company he set up and then six months after set up my own production company, Peanut Productions. We did a play of *Reservoir Dogs* which I directed, produced and acted in. So from the beginning I've always been interested in it.

**Some actors, when they break through, sit back a little, but you really went with the momentum. Was that a conscious choice?**

I suppose it's just because I was sitting around waiting to do it through most of my twenties. Now I have an appetite. I have gone at it pretty ferociously over the last eight years. Maybe there's a part of me that believes there's a time where you're at your best, and I wanna produce as much as I can when I'm at my best. Maybe I'm afraid I'm gonna die.

**When Steven Soderbergh made *Erin Brockovich*, *Traffic* and *Ocean's Eleven* really close together he said it just felt like he was "seeing the ball really well" — just go, go, go...**

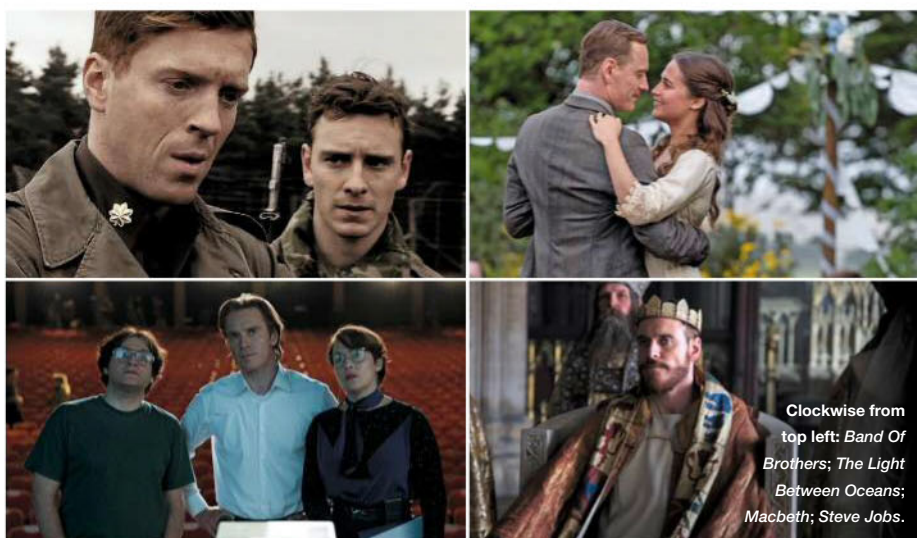
Yeah, that's right. I read an interview with Noel Gallagher, who said there was a period of time where he couldn't write a song wrong. And then he said there was another period where he couldn't get it right. I did plan to take breaks and then certain things came my way, like *Steve Jobs*. That was an intense year, from *Slow West* straight into *Macbeth* and then *Trespass Against Us* and then *The Light Between Oceans*. They all came back to back. I was like, "Okay, you better just take some time — and go see a shrink!" But then *Steve Jobs* came along and I thought, "Shit, this is such an unusual piece." And Danny [Boyle] and I had wanted to work together before. I just thought, "I gotta do it."

**After shooting *Band Of Brothers*, in 2001, you had a period where things weren't going brilliantly...**

To say it politely.

**What did success look like for you then? Did you have people you wanted to emulate?**

When I was about 17 I was looking at De Niro, Pacino, Gene Hackman, Brando. I wanted to reach that level of quality. But after *Band Of Brothers*, in my mid-twenties, when I left drama school and was working at a bar, I just wanted to work. Realism kicked in. My mantra became: "Be good enough to make a living out of it." That was the goal. Then I got lucky.



Clockwise from top left: *Band Of Brothers*; *The Light Between Oceans*; *Macbeth*; *Steve Jobs*.

**"I WANT TO PRODUCE AS MUCH AS I CAN WHEN I'M AT MY BEST. MAYBE I'M AFRAID I'M GONNA DIE."**

**How do you think the success of the last decade has changed you?**

I guess I've become more content. To be wanting to be doing something you love and to be doing it are worlds apart. You just feel very blessed.

**Perhaps one of the most surprising things about you is that you used to be an altar boy...**

[Laughs] Why is that a surprise to you?

**It does prompt the question: do you believe in God? Or, like in *Assassin's Creed*, the guiding hand of fate?**

Yeah, I do believe in fate, to be honest with you. Though if I really believed in it I guess I'd be like, "Well, it's all taken care of. Don't bother worrying." What I got from being an altar boy was a sense of theatre. I remember — without being blasphemous — being bored in mass, sitting there as a member of the congregation. But when I was around the altar and assisting the priest, bringing up the wine and the water and so forth, that felt pretty cool.

**You've worked with Terrence Malick, Steve McQueen, Ridley Scott, all these terrific directors. Do they share certain qualities?**

Passion. And bravery. To get to a certain level of truth, falling flat on your face in front of a group of people kind of goes with the territory. But also a sort of relentlessness. 'Cause all those guys — and [put] Andrea Arnold in the mix; what a fantastic filmmaker she is — are always searching, every day, you know? Knowing that when a scene's done you're not going to get another chance at doing it. Some directors use

storyboards. But it's the lines in-between those pictures where the unpredictable stuff, the life, is. That's the gold. When they talk about magic in films, it's those bits that aren't scripted or storyboarded, that you really have to dig out. "What was that that happened over there? Let's film that!" You have to be able to throw a plan out of the window.

**Were there any moments doing stuntwork on *Assassin's Creed* where you were like, "What am I doing here?"**

You know, it's funny — going up on the roofs in Malta, the real buildings, never scared me. But when I stood on this scaffolding structure, indoors in the studio, I felt really nervous. I'm on wires, but the first jump towards the ground is always a little bit of a sphincter moment. You just have to go, "God, just trust in it!" As I get older I get a little less brave at these things.

**And are there times when you feel wracked with fear even when a stunt's not involved?**

Oh yeah. I remember when I was doing *Steve Jobs*, I thought, "God, I'm drowning. How do I get out of this? Somebody break my arm!" I actually said to my driver, "Brian, I'll stick my arm in the door and you just slam it shut!" But you just go back to the process. Go upstairs, continue working, do what you know to do. I suppose there are benefits to the fear. It keeps you from taking things for granted. 🍷

ASSASSIN'S CREED IS IN CINEMAS FROM 6 JANUARY 2017







**the  
fopp  
100**

# best of 2016

**the lobster**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**sicario**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**victoria**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**high rise**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**the nice guys**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**room**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**tale of tales**  
also available  
on blu-ray



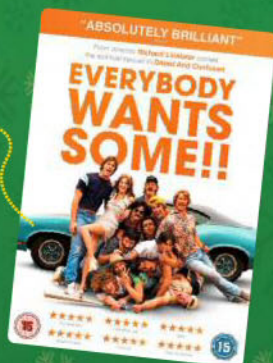
**carol**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**a bigger splash**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**everybody wants some!!**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**brooklyn**  
also available  
on blu-ray



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**the witch**  
also available  
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**miles ahead**  
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**bridge of spies**  
also available  
on blu-ray

**hail, caesar!**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**the jungle book**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**black mass**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**deadpool**  
also available  
on blu-ray

**macbeth**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**legend**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**a hologram for the king**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**batman vs superman: dawn of justice**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**crimson peak**  
also available  
on blu-ray



**ip man 3**  
also available  
on blu-ray



## fopp stores

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cambridge sidney st  
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glasgow union st & byres rd  
london covent garden  
manchester brown st  
nottingham broadmarsh  
shopping centre  
oxford gloucester green

## the fopp list

see our complete top 100 films of the year in this month's edition of the fopp list or online at [fopp.com](http://fopp.com)

while stocks last



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**WE SALUTE THE HEROES  
AND HIGH-POINTS OF 2016**



Ryan Reynolds's  
X-rated comic  
(anti)hero Deadpool.



# REVERIES

THE

**DEADPOOL, VIA HIS GOOD FRIEND RYAN REYNOLDS, FIELDS QUESTIONS ON HIS INCREDIBLE YEAR**

PORTHAIT ART STRIEBER

**How did you celebrate the success of your movie?**

I had the cast of *Sesame Street* fired.

**What's the most extravagant thing you've bought with all that cash?**

It's a Fox film. I was paid in cocaine.

**Who's your unluckiest celebrity fan?**

Deathstroke.

**What was your favorite movie of 2016? (No, your own.)**

*Hunt For The Wilderpeople*.  
(Serious answer.)

**Which film of 2016 would have been**

**improved by you being in it?**

The Amanda Knox documentary.

**What's the strangest fan encounter you've had this year?**

I got my wife pregnant.

**You filmed a video for our special issue.**

**What's that?**

Well, hell. Don't do that to your magazine. It's not in it.

to ship useless ash. Then I'll go home to your wives, husbands and lovers to pick up the pieces of their broken little hearts and love them through this tragedy. Sure, it'll take time, but many minutes later they'll have forgotten all about you as I sing Taylor Swift's *You Belong With Me* in perfect symphony to my acrobatic yet alarmingly emotional love-making.

**What can we expect from the season 2?**

Trucker snorting live mice off a mirror in the bathroom at the Minneapolis airport. Followed by a festival of handjob. (Serious answer.)

**Are you going to upgrade your suit?**

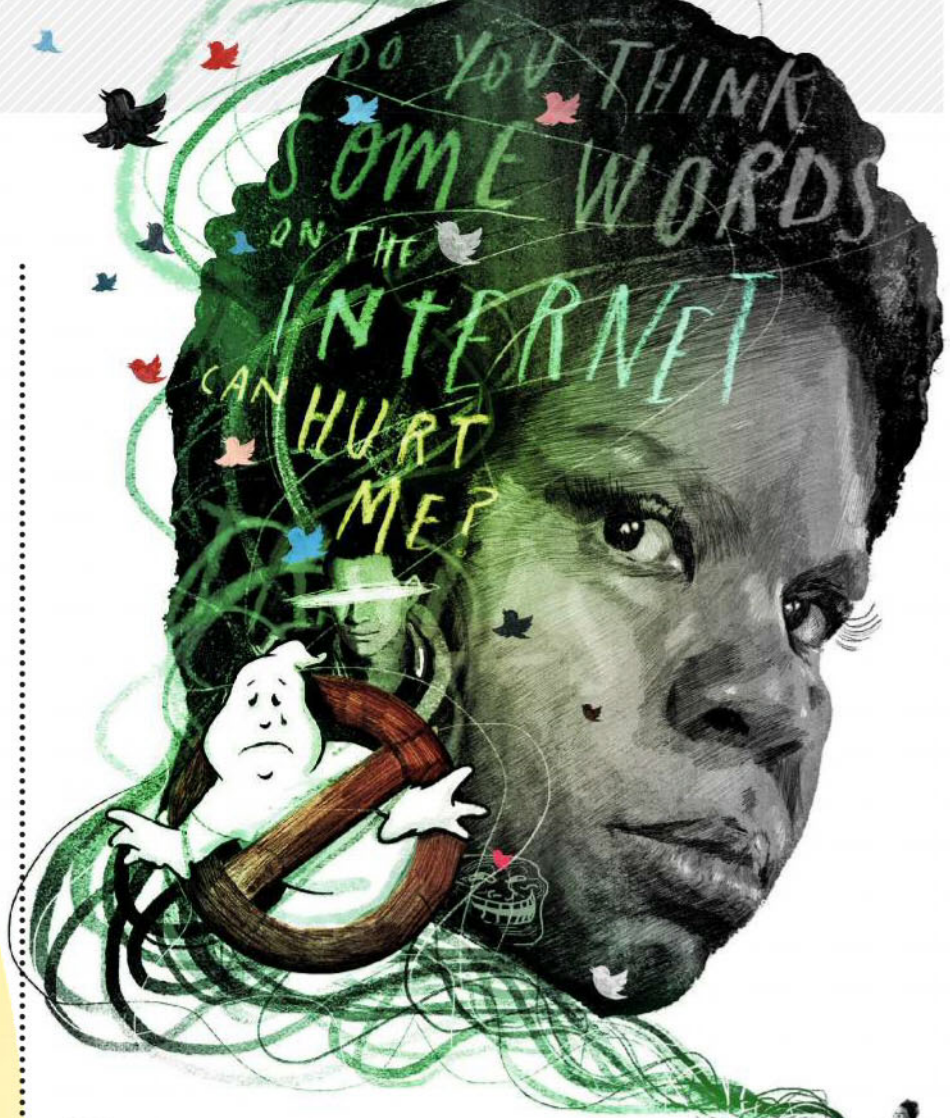
We're adding tasteful underwear, but the point is, I'm sorry for that thing I said about burning stuff and your families. I don't know whether I age like that comes from.

**What are your New Year's Eve plans?**

Who's asking? Doug? Did Doug contact you?

**Thank you.**

Fuck you.



## THE STORY LESLIE JONES AIN'T AFRAID OF NO TROLLS

ILLUSTRATION PETER STRAIN



THIS SUMMER SHOULD have been glorious for Leslie Jones. After a decade of popping up in films as characters such as 'Trucker Woman' (*National Security*) and 'Angry Subway Patron' (*Trainwreck*), the 49-year-old *Saturday Night Live* cast member finally got her big break, as one of the lead quartet in Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters* reboot. She headed to Boston and spent a major chunk of 2015 battling phantoms. But online, trouble was brewing. Countless male 'fans', furious at the casting of female leads, targeted a torrent of abuse at everyone involved. Jones received the worst of it, with many horrific, often racist messages aimed at her Twitter account. When *Empire* caught up with her just before the movie's release, she was thoroughly bummed out. "It makes me very sad," she said. "If someone was to tell me, 'Hey, Leslie, we did research and found out that all those people sending insults to you were 11 years old,' I'd be like, 'Okay, that makes sense.' But these are actual grown people that use their energy to take a computer out and spew hate."

Once removed from their audiences, many stars now interact freely with fans. But as 2016

progressed, Jones became a cautionary tale for this type of digital intimacy: not only did the assaults on her continue after the film's release, but in late August the comedian's iCloud account was hacked and nude photos released online, as well as images of her passport and driving licence.

At times, Jones seemed crushed. "I leave Twitter tonight with tears and a very sad heart," she posted at one point. Happily, in the long run she proved unstoppable. Receiving supportive messages from the likes of Katy Perry, John Boyega and even Hillary Clinton, she not only kept going as @Lesdoggg, but live-tweeted the Olympics to such acclaim that NBC flew her to Rio. Finally, on 22 October, she returned to *SNL*'s Weekend Update desk with a defiant message: "Do you think some words on the internet can hurt me? I once had a crazy bitch try to beat me with a shovel at a bus stop because I took her spot on the bench. Now *that's* a troll!" Online harassment of celebrities will continue, but Jones has proved a laudable example of how to deal with it, a hero both with a proton pack and without.



Millie Bobby Brown,  
photographed  
exclusively for *Empire*  
at the Rosewood  
London hotel, on  
22 September 2016.





# THE PRODIGY

## MILLIE BOBBY BROWN STRANGER THINGS

WORDS JOHN NUGENT PORTRAIT STEVE NEAVES

**MOST ACTORS TREAD** the boards for the first time in a school play. For Millie Bobby Brown, it was at the 2016 Emmy Awards, performing *Uptown Funk* with her *Stranger Things* co-stars to an audience of 7,000, plus 11.3 million more at home. As stage debuts go, it's pretty extreme. But Brown shrugs it off. "I'd done a Comic-Con before," she says. "I've never been shy of big crowds."

Big crowds are starting to become standard for the 12-year-old best known as Eleven, the smash Netflix show's psychokinetic, Eggo waffle-loving heroine. There have been talk shows. There have been magazine covers. There's been an audience at the White House. And there's been the whirlwind of *that* Emmys show, during which John Travolta, Melissa McCarthy and David Schwimmer all declared themselves fans. "I was shouting, 'Pivot!' at David Schwimmer like the *Friends* episode!" grins Brown. An episode, it's terrifying to note, that first aired five years before she was born.

The insanity hasn't stopped there. Since the sci-fi series launched in July, Eleven has also inspired tattoos, Halloween costumes, a Kate McKinnon impression on *Saturday Night Live* and all-around fan hysteria. "I was at Comic-Con," recounts Brown, "when this group of girls came up to me and just started crying! I was like, 'Why are you crying over me? I'm just Millie!'"

Fortunately, she has plenty of support to help her from being sucked into the Upside Down of sudden fame. Her family manage her social-media accounts (1.6 million and counting on Instagram), *Stranger Things* creators the Duffer Brothers are "like big brothers", and Matthew Modine, who plays the shadowy scientist Eleven calls "Papa", is "genuinely like my second dad". The latter bonded with Brown as she had her head shaved for the role — Modine, of course, went under the razor for *Full Metal Jacket*.

The question, then, is what next? Eleven's return in Season 2 has been confirmed, but how did she escape apparent evaporation? And will she have a fresh stock of Eggos? Brown handles our questions with the guarded ambiguity of a seasoned pro. "I could tell you. But then I'd have to kill you." Presumably with her mind.



# THE CAMEO



## SIGOURNEY WEAVER IN *FINDING DORY*

*THE BIG SHORT* had Margot Robbie explaining financial jargon in a bath. *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* dared us to forget Judd Apatow's penis. And Justin Bieber was, somehow, the best thing about *Zoolander No. 2*. Yet it's Sigourney Weaver who wears this year's cameo crown. Partly for her fun turn as Kate McKinnon's daffy mentor in *Ghostbusters* ("I wanted to play her with a German accent — Paul Feig said no!"), but mainly for her surprise appearance in *Finding Dory*.

Or rather, non-appearance. For Weaver plays herself as a voice booming over the speakers to welcome visitors to the aquarium where most of the film takes place. Her opening gambit — "I'm Sigourney Weaver" — gets the film's biggest laugh. "I'd worked with [director] Andrew Stanton on *WALL•E*," says Weaver, who voiced the ship's computer in that film. "He called and said, 'I have something for you on *Dory*.' I was flattered as I've done a lot of work about the oceans and conservation. When the fish say, 'My friend Sigourney,' I was thrilled."

Recording the session took around two hours, and clearly gave Weaver the taste for it: she'll also play herself in Noah Baumbach's *Yeh Din Ka Kissa*. Could Weaver lift next year's Best Cameo title too, then? Judd Apatow's penis has its work cut out.

## THE QUOTES

THE MOST MEMORABLE UTTERANCES FROM THE MOUTHS OF STARS TO THE EARS OF *EMPIRE*

**"He calls it 'fuck-dust'. He liberally sprinkled fuck-dust on the film."**

CHARLIE HUNNAM ON GUY RITCHIE'S PROCESS

**"I imagined a child drawing a mouse's head. I'm talking triangular member and balls to either side in place of the mouse's ears."**

THE GREASY STRANGLER DIRECTOR JIM HOSKING'S PENIS-DESIGN SECRETS

**"One or two people smile at me now when I go through an airport, rather than muttering, 'Wanker,' as I pass, which is a change."**

SAM NEILL IS FEELING THE HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE EFFECT

**"That night I ate some mushrooms and I did self-inflict some burns."**

JAI COURTNEY REVEALS HIS *SUICIDE SQUAD* PREP

**"Superman can go fuck himself."**

JENNIFER LAWRENCE, NOT A FAN OF KAL-EL

## TOP FIVE DANIEL RADCLIFFES

HE WAS EVERYWHERE, RADDERS. EVEN WHEN HE WASN'T QUITE HIMSELF



1

### DEAD RADCLIFFE

As talking corpse Manny in *Swiss Army Man*, Radcliffe gave the performance of his life. Plus, he had a hard-on that acted as a GPS. Comes in handy.



2

### NEW HARRY RADCLIFFE

Jamie Parker ably replaced him as fortysomething Harry in smash-hit West End play *The Cursed Child*. Or it might be Radcliffe dosed up on Polyjuice Potion.



3

### DUMMY RADCLIFFE

Radcliffe got help on the *Swiss Army Man* promo trail from this incredibly lifelike and totally realistic dummy. GPS not included — we checked.



4

### NAZI RADCLIFFE

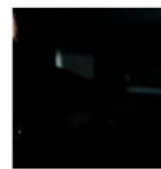
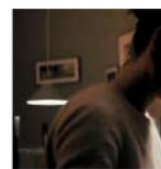
As an FBI agent infiltrating a white-supremacist group in *Imperium*, Radcliffe shaved his head, got (temporary) tattoos and swore.



5

### GRIMSBY RADCLIFFE

When Radcliffe passed on the chance to appear as himself in the Sacha Baron Cohen comedy, lookalike Matthew Baldwin stepped in.



ALLSTAR, REX, TOM HOWARD





## THE SHOT VICTORIA

"ONE CITY. ONE night. One take," ran the tagline for *Victoria*, and it wasn't kidding. No other shot this year comes close to the ambition, precision and sheer chutzpah of the epic oner (length: 133 minutes and four seconds) that makes up the entirety of Sebastian Schipper's Berlin-set thriller. Operated by cinematographer Sturla Brandth Grøvlen, the film's OS C300 digital camera whips through a strobe-lashed nightclub, ambles down city streets and even tags along on a car ride. It took just three attempts over a single night to get it right, a kinetic tour de force made in the time it takes David Fincher to shoot the opening of a door. "We're extremely proud and happy," says Schipper, emailing from a trip around Mexico, of receiving the accolade. "Fun fact: what's the first drink Victoria orders? Right, a shot! Wait... the shot of the year is not for that? Is it?" Not exactly, sir, but your achievement is well worth a toast.



THE  
GANGSTA

JULIAN DENNISON  
HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE

WORDS HELEN O'HARA PORTRAIT CHARLIE GRAY

"IT DOES GET weird," says Julian Dennison of the fame he's experienced since Taika Waititi's *Hunt For The Wilderpeople* became New Zealand's biggest-ever homegrown hit. "Like, if you're rushing to the loo and someone asks for a photo, I'm like, 'You won't get a very nice photo!' I think it raised \$12 million in New Zealand and our population is only four million, so everyone saw it three times. It's sort of like *Pokémon Go*."

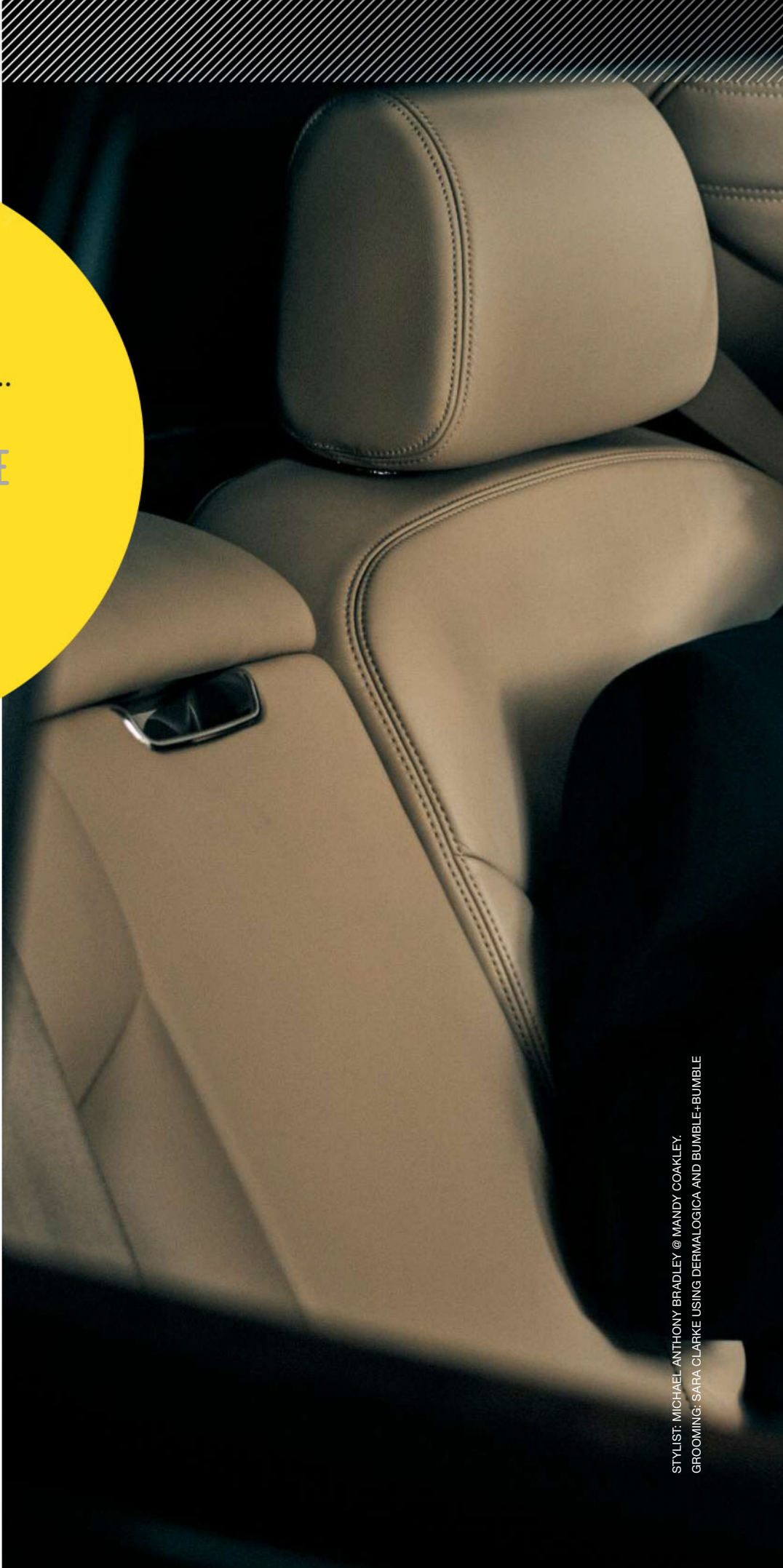
The 14-year-old's "bad egg" Ricky Baker is a comedy creation for the ages, dispensing great lines as he wanders the wilds with grumpy foster carer Uncle Hec (Sam Neill). "We didn't learn much about the outdoors because we had catering, we had warm clothes, we pretty much had the army," Dennison says. "I learned something from the sound guy about the edible ends of vines, but I forgot ten minutes later. Bush skills coming out of this film: zero to none."

But Dennison, who has one more year of acting before a planned three-year sabbatical to focus on finishing school, says his co-star gave him acting advice that stuck a little better — though he hasn't yet received the ultimate accolade of having one of Neill's farm animals named after him. "If he gets, like, a dinosaur, or a bald eagle, he should name it Julian. And he has his own winery! Maybe on my 21st birthday he can shout the whole party."

Dennison's mum casts doubt on that notion ("Consider the size of your family, honey"), highlighting the fundamental difference between Ricky and Julian: the latter is no kind of juvenile delinquent. "There are scenes in the film where I say some bad language and give the finger, and I didn't want to do it," he admits. "Every time I'd look at Mum and be like, 'Sorry!'"

At least he's gangsta enough to explain Ricky's favourite slang word to the uninitiated. "It's s-k-u-x, and if you want to get really into it, two Xs. It sort of means you're cool, spunky, awesome. It's the compliment of compliments."

Julian Dennison, then: a pretty skuxx guy. Let's hope 2017 treats him as well.



STYLIST: MICHAEL ANTHONY BRADLEY @ MANDY COAKLEY.  
GROOMING: SARA CLARKE USING DERMALOGICA AND BUMBLE+BUMBLE



Julian Dennison,  
photographed  
exclusively for  
*Empire* in Fitzrovia,  
London, on 16  
September 2016.





# THE SCENE

## WHEN PETER MET TONY CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

Getting to know you:  
Tony Stark (Robert  
Downey Jr.) meets  
Tom Holland's Peter  
Parker, aka Spider-Man.

THE FIRST MEETING of Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark and Tom Holland as the brand-new Peter Parker, which comes just over an hour into *Captain America: Civil War*, is a thing of joy: a quickfire back-and-forth as Stark, who has shown up at Peter's New York apartment unannounced, cajoles and teases the reluctant Parker into joining his superteam. It's funny, poignant and wonderfully written and performed — all without a mention of Peter's Uncle Ben or a “with great power comes great responsibility” in sight. “Our mandate wasn’t to mention those things,” says co-writer Christopher Markus. “Our mandate was to write a good scene. The fumbling over topics and Peter trying to evade being discovered gave it its own energy.”

**INT. PETER'S BEDROOM — DAY**  
*Tony looks around the room.*

**TONY:** Whoa, what have we here? Retro tech? Thrift store? Salvation Army?

**PETER:** The garbage, actually.

**TONY:** You're a dumpster-diver?

**PETER:** Yeah, I was... Anyway, look, I definitely did not apply for your grant...

**TONY:** Nuh-uh. Me first.

**PETER:** Okay.

**TONY:** Quick question of the rhetorical variety. *[He beams footage of Spider-Man in action from his phone]* That's you, right?

**PETER:** No. What do you mean?

**TONY:** Yeah. *[Playing more footage]* Look at you go. Wow! Nice catch. Three thousand pounds, 40 miles an hour. That's not easy. You got mad skills.

**PETER:** That's all on YouTube, though, right? That's where you found that? Because you know that's all fake. It's all done on the computer. It's like that video... What is it?



**TONY:** Yeah. You mean, like those UFOs over Phoenix?

**PETER:** Exactly.

*Tony uses a broom to open an attic door. A Spider-Man suit falls down. Peter sighs.*

**TONY:** What have we here? So... you're the Spider-ling. Crime-Fighting Spider. You're Spider-Boy?

**PETER:** Spider-Man.

**TONY:** Not in that onesie, you're not.



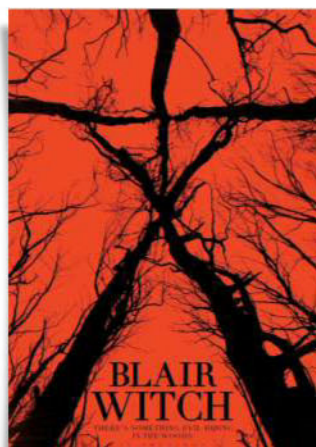
## THE MEME DAVID S. PUMPKINS

THE WORLD HAD plenty of reasons to be thankful for Tom Hanks this year. If he wasn't landing a plane on the Hudson in *Sully*, he was saving the whole shebang in *Inferno*. But his crowning glory came in a form nobody could have predicted: a seemingly throwaway *Saturday Night Live* sketch involving a haunted elevator, dancing skeletons, an electro earworm and a gurning enigma named David S. Pumpkins (catchphrase: “Any queeeestions?”). It aired on 22 October — by the next day, Pumpkins was everywhere, with tribute videos, Hallowe'en costumes and the surest sign you've made it: parody Twitter accounts. Hanks has been tight-lipped about it, saying only, “I'm going to be David S. Pumpkins for the rest of my life,” but with any luck there's a movie in the works. After all, we have many queeeestions.



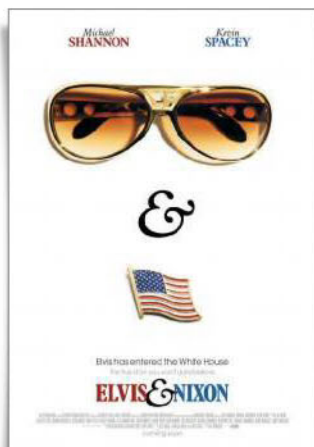
# THE POSTERS

CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN, PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ART, CRITIQUES SOME OF 2016'S MOST NOTABLE ONE-SHEETS



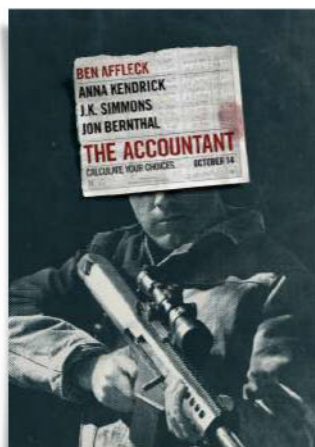
## BLAIR WITCH

"This reminded me of [Turner Prize-winning contemporary artists] Gilbert and George — probably that strong colour, the red and black. It's a very powerful composition. The symbolism works well. It's unsettling. I felt that was a really good one. And actually using the conventions of 20th- and 21st-century art."



## ELVIS & NIXON

"This is really sophisticated. It's witty. It's ironic. The use of the flag like a little mouth. The fact that the folded glasses make eyes within the lenses. It's obviously referencing surrealism. Things like Salvador Dalí. And it's not trying too hard. It's just saying, 'Look, this is interesting enough already, Elvis and Nixon!'"



## THE ACCOUNTANT

"This is really intriguing because it looks like a very politicised artist called John Heartfield, who was working in Germany in the '20s. His work was mostly in black and white and he was effectively the inventor of the collaged image. I like the graininess, like a newspaper, and the hint of blood in the thumbprint. Striking."



## SUICIDE SQUAD

"It's like they've deliberately made a bad poster. Sweets, but with death heads: the irony is heavy. Not subtle. The cultural references are interesting, because it's picking up on things like [graffiti artist and neo-expressionist painter] Jean-Michel Basquiat. If you like bad taste, this is probably for you."



## ROGUE ONE

"This is disappointing. The image in the sky reminded me of the great Paul Nash painting about the Battle Of Britain: it's all the tracks of the fighter planes in the sky, making the shape of giant flowers. I wonder whether that might be something that triggered this. Other than that, I think it is deeply bland."

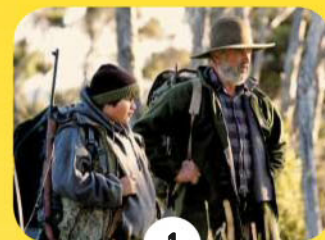


## NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

"There's this very successful artist at the moment, Mark Bradford, whose work is made from torn posters. So it's not beyond imagining that they've picked up on his work. It's interesting. They've used the classic trope of a human face so the eye engages you visually. Good composition, in painting terms."

## EMPIRE'S FILMS OF 2016

THE MOVIES THAT MOVED US, THRILLED US AND MADE US WANT TO GO ON THE RUN IN THE NEW ZEALAND WILDERNESS



1

## HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE

2

## ARRIVAL

3

## HELL OR HIGH WATER

4

## CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

5

## VICTORIA

6

## THE HATEFUL EIGHT

7

## KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS

8

## THE REVENANT

9

## SPOTLIGHT

10

## GREEN ROOM







# THE RING Cycle

TO CELEBRATE THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF *THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING*, WE ASKED EACH OF ITS NINE HEROES TO POSE NINE QUESTIONS TO ANOTHER. PREPARE FOR NOSTALGIA, PHILOSOPHY AND SHOCKING VINEGAR-BASED REVELATIONS

RINGMASTER NICK DE SEMLYEN ILLUSTRATION JUSTIN METZ TYPE PETER STRAIN





**1 What surprised you most about *The Lord Of The Rings*?**

How intimate it felt. I had nothing to compare it to then, but this quality has become more special over time. All of us embarked on something that had never been done before, tucked away in beautiful New Zealand, and it all felt home-grown, like the world's largest independent film.

**2 Did it open new doors for you?**

Certainly. More profoundly, living abroad for the first time and the personal growth I experienced as a result set me forth on the rest of my life.

**3 Was there any detriment workwise to doing it?**

I don't think so. I definitely remember a feeling of not wanting to rest on the success of the films, but I didn't feel pigeonholed. I just knew I had to keep working and challenging myself.

**4 Have you acquired new interests?**

I DJ as a hobby, which has increasingly become a source of enjoyment and expression. I've always wanted to open a restaurant, as I'd love to marry the creativity of designing a space whilst giving a great chef a place to create. And opening a record store is something I've wanted to do since I was a teenager. Certainly no shortage of things I've dreamed about.

**5 What car do you drive?**

I have a 1984 Mercedes diesel wagon. It's long been a favourite car of mine and I finally found one in excellent condition last year.

**6 I hear you have a new TV series. What is it about?**

It's called *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* and it's based on Douglas Adams' series of books. It's difficult to summarise, but essentially a wild, funny, mad detective show with a case that is constantly revealing itself as it goes along. I'm excited for people to dig in.



**7 Are you seeing someone?**  
Yes, sir.

**8 What do you say when young people ask about becoming an actor?**

That one should love the craft and have no other motivations beyond that passion. That it takes hard work and perseverance. Don't wait for the opportunities to come to you. Create your own.

**9 Where do you see yourself being another 15 years down the road?**

Still making films and hopefully directing. And I imagine I'll still be talking about these films: my love of New Zealand, the closeness of the cast and crew, the craftsmanship of the various departments and the new roads they paved, and so much more.



**1 It's been nearly 20 years since we all first arrived in New Zealand. What are your memories of those first months?**

I am the sort of optimist who only remembers the positives. So discovering New Zealand's culture and scenery sums up the joy of it all, and the family atmosphere Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh nurtured.

**2 What were your favourite parts of the country you visited on free time?**

Milford Sound, despite the biting, flying insects. The Coromandel coast in the North Island, where you can bathe in hot water on the beach and stare out at the South Pacific, green and sparkling.

**3 How long did it take you to recover from the constant barrage of script revisions?**

It was tiresome, wasn't it? Particularly for this theatre actor who has spent a career honouring a text, honed and settled before production starts. Still, it kept us on our toes and I always had the paperback hidden in my robe, to refer to.

**4 It's not often discussed that every line of dialogue was re-recorded in ADR for the entire trilogy. Though daunting, I remember it being a very intricate creative process. How was your experience?**

ADR is fun — a technical challenge that sometimes can improve original readings. Has it occurred to you that everyone in Middle-earth wore a wig and most of us a prosthetic of some sort? Feet and ears for you, nose for me.

**5 At the end of all things, I'll never forget returning home and finding it quite bizarre to assimilate to life again. How did you find it?**

A bit different for me, as I've often done wonderful long-lasting jobs away from home. But as it turned out I was back for the three *Hobbit* movies — it was such a joy that you were there too, for a little while.





The Fellowship prepare to set off on their mighty quest. Straight after second breakfast.



The bar staff at Ian McKellen's pub, The Grapes.

## 6 What felt most unique to you about the project?

The real thrill — and an unusual one — was to know that millions of Tolkien fans wanted the film to be made. When we returned to complete filming after the release of the first one, there were none of the usual worries about whether our efforts would be appreciated.

## 7 What did you keep from your time as Gandalf?

I keep Glamdring in my hatstand and the pointy hat in the basement, often worn by visiting youngsters. Gandalf's staff is behind the bar in my Thames-side pub The Grapes. Don't tell Peter, but the keys to Bag End are hanging up at home.

## 8 Upon visiting Bag End for the first time since it was relocated to Peter's home, I discovered a letter Gandalf had written to Frodo sitting on the mantelpiece. Do you know if he received Frodo's reply?

I don't recall Gandalf mentioning it last time we spoke. Perhaps he simply forgot — not even wizards are perfect.

## 9 How did your *Hobbit* experience differ from *The Lord Of The Rings*? Oh, and I'm sorry about the loud music the Hobbits often played in our shared make-up trailer. (And I miss and love you.) So many old friends behind the camera, but

I missed the old team of actors. Mind you, it was a joy to work with Martin Freeman and the dwarves. I was glad to be rid of that old stick Gandalf The White. The Grey was always my favourite. Don't you remember when it was my turn to play a track, I asked for silence instead? Now I'm nostalgic, remembering those early mornings in the make-up trailer, six days a week.



## 1 Coming from an acting family, was there ever anything else you imagined doing?

By 14, I had decided on three modest goals: world-class filmmaker, CEO of a multi-billion-

dollar entertainment company and President of the United States. I've had to settle for journeyman actor. *C'est la vie.*

## 2 Without checking your website, how many awards have you won?

Not as many as my mom used to think I should have. Maybe ten? I'm most proud of the SAG Ensemble Award we claimed together for *The Return Of The King*. The statue is quite heavy — I tell folks that it weighs the exact same as my sense of self-worth.

## 3 How's the foundation in your mother's memory proceeding?

Slowly. Thank you so much for asking. We've raised \$46,000, one fifth of the target. This is a generous and beautiful expression of love. At the moment, we are exploring holding a 5k walk/run in the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, her home town of 30 years. I think it would be a cool living memorial for her. Pretty please stay tuned!

## 4 Did you ever discover how Samwise got his name?

As a half-wise or simple person myself, like ol' Sam, I never saw the need to know.

## 5 Where do you keep the sword you were given when you completed *LOTR*?

The garage, or maybe a cupboard, or in storage with a ton of fan art. I cried heavily through my send-off. I remember being presented with my costume, including Sam's backpack (pots, pans, sausages, elven rope, lembas bread, box of salt) and sword. But the most moving trophy was the wee dress [my daughter] Ali wore as she portrayed Elanor in the last moments of *ROTK*.

## 6 Will you ever do a New Zealand marathon?

It is possible — you know I completed the Ironman triathlon in Kona, Hawaii, last October? Ironman invited me to participate in one of their New Zealand triathlons, in the shadow of Mount Doom [Ruapehu]. I'm seriously considering it for March 2018.

## 7 Would you like to be a guide at what remains of Hobbiton?

No. I wouldn't mind building a Hobbit hotel there, though.

## 8 Did you ever have another tattoo?

Not yet. But I like the idea of someday getting a tattoo of my running charity #Run3rd's colourful logo.

## 9 Will you give my love to the family?

I can't give them something they will never lose. The impact you've had on Ali was greater than you could ever know. She studies drama at Harvard and did a report on one of your Shakespeare masterclasses (thanks, YouTube). Okay, I will give them your love. But, it's only polite for you to accept ours right back :-))) >





**1 Why haven't we seen each other in forever?**

Because we are both busy, successful people with families and we live well over an hour away from each other. But you will always be in my heart, Hobbit brother. Also, you smell of vinegar.

**2 I heard you got hurt. Are you okay?**

Hmm, this week? I'm always getting hurt. I want my dead body to be strewn with scars. I broke my foot in Bali and healed poorly. So, I needed surgery to make sure all my toe and foot bones behave well moving forward.

**3 Are you ever going to manage Manchester United?**

Ha, I wish. Manchester United is one of my happy places. I converted many people to United fans. Including you!

**4 What is the state of your body, vis-à-vis tattoos?**

I think I have 12. My last one says, "What matters most is how well we walk through fire."

**5 If there is ever a *Goonies* sequel, would you be in it?**

Of course! It's one of my favourite childhood movies. Up there with *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*. I want to go down into the treasure spot!

**6 You spend so much time with deadly creatures [in TV show *Wild Things With Dominic Monaghan*]... do you think people can be poisonous too?**

You mean venomous? Certainly in terms of energy. We are all sponges to other humans' vibes and want to empathise. But I will not seek out complainers or blamers. Good vibes only.

**7 Which Beatle would you be and why?**

Even though Lennon is my favourite, I think he was in hell a lot of the time, so living as him might be torture. George seemed to have the most fun. Great garden. Gorgeous women. Cosmic.



**8 Are you happy?**

With these questions? Seventy-one per cent. In life? Of course! My foot is irksome but my life is an A+. I'd give myself a solid 86 per cent currently. Also my little nephew makes me beam.

**9 Whatever happened to that black car?**

*Empire* readers should know that Sean sold me his BMW 318i after I moved to L.A. Yes, sold it to me. From one millionaire Hobbit to another with barely a tuppence to my name! After buying it I had to sell my body on Hollywood Boulevard. Thankfully, my body is tight like a Ukrainian gymnast's and I made the money back in days. Well, nights.

I gave it away after it almost killed me on my driveway. I was having it towed and it pinned me to my house. I was very close to death. Maybe the closest I've been. So yes, Sean Astin almost killed me. After taking my cash. I love you, Sean!

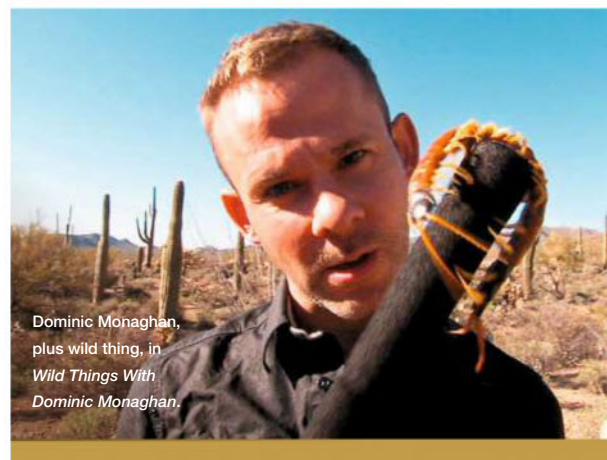


**1 What has been the greatest lesson of being a dad?**

Seeing the world through a new pair of eyes. It teaches you how exciting everything can be if we really try to look at it anew. How joy can be everywhere if we open ourselves up to it.

**2 Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

This is so hard because it will always sound egotistical. Can I identify myself with Stan Laurel? I'm not that funny! Gandhi? I'm not



that good! But to answer off the top of my head I would say George Harrison. When I read about him or see him talking I can identify with his thinking. He loved to create but was not overly comfortable with promoting.

**3 What inspires you more than anything else?**

The size of the universe. I find if I just sit and think about it, it makes me happy and somehow inspires me.

**4 Give an example of a genius.**

Prince. Probably no-one had a bigger impact in my growing up. So sad that he passed away so young.

**5 Which existing song do you wish you had written?**

I could easily pick a Prince song! But to mix it up a bit, I will pick one from George Harrison. Can





The furry-footed fraternity: only one of them is channelling George Harrison.



you imagine being the other songwriter in a band with Lennon and McCartney? It must have been so hard to bring a song to the table, but we are so blessed that he did. I will go with *Something*. Such a beautiful, beautiful song.

## 6 What is your favourite thing about our friendship?

So many things, my dearest Dom! I love how relaxed we are in each other's company. And the ability for our time together to take us anywhere. We might be chatting about music, which brings us to watching a documentary about The Stone Roses — then there's a part in it where they are eating Indian food so we pause it to go to an Indian restaurant, where we will talk through a film idea where we play sound men for The Hollies in the Himalayas or something. I like the adventures we go on, even when we're just sitting on your sofa drinking a bottle of wine.

## 7 What would be your one magic wish for planet Earth?

Peace, peace, peace. While we have an "us" and "them", there will always be tension and violence, so we have to all stand together to make real changes to the world.

## 8 What would you tell the 18-year-old Billy and what would you ask the 100-year-old Billy?

To 18: Have fun, travel, read more. Don't worry

about being bad at something. Oh... and learn a language.

To 100: If you could live again, where in the world would you spend most of your time?

## 9 You are stranded on an island. You can know only one concept fully and truly. What is it?

Meditation.



## 1 Is there a Shakespearean character you would like to play?

I would, at this time in my life, choose either Shylock or Timon. Of the female characters, Margaret of Anjou.

## 2 If you could speak one other language, what would it be?

Arabic. I speak a little, but would like to be fluent: it would allow me to better understand, and more ably try to make myself understood, in countries that have Arabic as their primary language. It would also give me a better chance to do something concrete, in the field, to help refugees in and from the Middle East.

## 3 If you could play for one sports team in the world, which would it be?

As an attacking midfielder for Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro, of Boedo, Argentina.

## 4 If you could live one day over, which would you pick?

I would rather not live any day over again. Things have been, are, and will be just so, and justly so.

## 5 Is there a scene from Tolkien not in the films that you wish was?

I'd like to have seen what Peter Jackson would have done with the character Ghân-buri-Ghân, the chief of the Drúedain, wild men of the Drúadan Forest. Seeing him lead King Théoden and his army of Rohirrim through the forest to join the fight to save Minas Tirith would have been thrilling.

## 6 If you could eat one thing right now, what would it be?

Cedar-wood campfire-roasted Agria potatoes with aioli sauce on the side.

## 7 If you could kiss me again, would you?

I am anxiously counting the interminable minutes that pass until it happens again.

## 8 If you could own any piece of art, what would it be?

A Poplar-Lined Road At Sunset, France by Minerva Chapman.

## 9 If you could play with one band, who would it be?

I would love to tour with guitarist Buckethead, with the accompaniment, as needed, of high-tide surf in winter, running up and down a gravel beach, the morning tunes of song sparrows, different kinds of rain on a variety of tin roofs, and Johnny Hartman singing Irving Berlin's *They Say It's Wonderful* from the 1963 LP *John Coltrane And Johnny Hartman*.

I'd play piano and maybe sing now and then, or recite poems — and we'd jam together in ancient movie houses and natural outdoor settings, with projected silent movies for inspiration. Movies like Dreyer's *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc*, Murnau's *Sunrise*, Vidor's *The Crowd*, Steiner's *H2O*, or Reiniger's *The Adventures Of Prince Achmed*, as well as anonymous home movies. Or perhaps simply just you and me, a guitar, a piano, and your lovely voice. And Buckethead ought to come with us — why not?



## 1 Is there a scene from LOTR you would want to reshoot?

I wouldn't say I'd like to reshoot anything, but I wouldn't mind going back and doing it all again. The first one, anyway :)

## 2 What character have you most enjoyed playing in the theatre?



Macbeth. The darkness of the story always fascinated me. I first saw it performed with Ian McKellen and Judi Dench in Wath-upon-Dearne near Rotherham and found it totally enthralling. I suppose it was always an ambition to play the part and I went on to do so in the West End. But basically, I just like evil shit!

### 3 Did you watch Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* trilogy?

Yes, I did, and was very impressed. It was so interesting to see characters like Bilbo and Gandalf in their early years. The landscapes and ancient woodland settings jolted my memories of being on the set of *Lord Of The Rings*. And you in full costume, fishing in a river in the middle of the night like a nutcase.

### 4 When were you last in New Zealand?

Unfortunately, I haven't had the chance to go back since we finished filming. One conciliation is that my daughter married a Kiwi earlier this year. He has a large family there, so we'll always have a place to stay when I make the journey back one day.

### 5 Which of the books you've read this year is your favourite?

My favourite, as usual, is the one I am reading presently. Which is *Berlin Noir* by Philip Kerr.

### 6 I've been preparing some new trees — Basque Country oaks, a silver birch, and a few sugar maples. What have you been planting lately?

Some weeping silver birch and willow. I intend to plant more saplings of elder, hornbeam, dogwood and hawthorn every autumn, so in time I'll create a small wood with various leaf colours. My garden is a mixture of topiaries and evergreens, with areas of wilderness you can get lost in.

### 7 What is the worst injury you have ever suffered?

I fell through a glass door as a child and almost lost my leg. It was hanging off and took me nearly a year to recover. But I'm alright now, thanks.

### 8 Do you believe we humans have free will?

Yes, I believe we have if we allow it to thrive and develop, without the impositions of propaganda and prejudice. Free will can only flourish when we are surrounded by art, literature and music.

### 9 It has been a while since you and I have seen each other — I believe the last time was at the Empire Awards a few years ago — and I miss your company. I cannot for the life of me remember whose turn it is to buy the next round. Do you?

I think it's yours. Actually, I don't remember either. I do remember sharing a bottle of whiskey with you, which you took up onto the stage when you won your well-earned award. (After your critique of Russell Crowe.) It was a fine night.



### 1 Do you find yourself always having to explain the meaning of your *LOTR* tattoo?

All day and night.

### 2 Have you still got any of the stuff you nicked from the set?

Er... I did not "nick" anything! I was too young and innocent for that. Actually I lie, I may

have somehow managed to wander off with an elven brooch.

### 3 Where do you call home these days?

Between the US and the UK. Too long in one and I crave the other. I've called Shanghai home for the last two months: I am here filming.

### 4 What is your TV guilty pleasure?

Most recently *Stranger Things* — reminds me of the Americana I watched and loved on TV growing up. I tend to wait until the whole season is out and then binge.

### 5 What do you believe is most destructive to the soul?

Are you forcing me to think and feel, Sean? Well, Albert Einstein, one of the wizards of our time, said "stupidity, fear and greed". There's a lot of that around, particularly if you turn on the news. The antidotes are courage, wisdom and compassion — which are coincidentally the qualities of most Hobbits. The rest of us elves and humans have to work harder to manifest them.

### 6 The last time I enjoyed your company was in a pub in North London on a hot summer's afternoon. What memory occurs to you of us together?





Here: Under siege in the mines of Moria. John Rhys-Davies' Nokia 6310i just out of shot. Below: Viggo, Sean, award and whiskey: ingredients for a memorable night.



Remember when you and I got stranded between two landslides? We were driving from the top of the South Island to the bottom. We all know how you hate to fly and this was a way to avoid that flight down. The rain started just before we left and didn't stop for 12 hours. We had to manoeuvre around tree debris and I remember thinking, "I wish this car was a 4x4." Then we drove up to a landslide that had taken out the whole

road. We had to turn back, only to be told while refuelling at a petrol station that there'd been an even bigger slide in the other direction. We had to be on set the next day, so ended up being choppered out in torrential rain and howling wind. It had compounded into your worst nightmare! I'll never forget those white knuckles of yours clasp my knee as the chopper took off.

### 7 What was it like becoming a father?

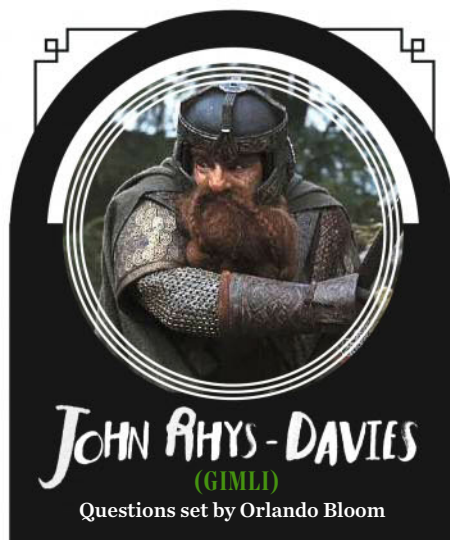
No single moment has had such a profound effect on my life as when I held my son after his mother had endured 27 hours of labour. That should teach any man the meaning of respect for mothers the world over.

### 8 As a heartthrob myself, I wondered if you had any tips to stop the signs of ageing? (Just asking for a friend.)

Being a heartthrob yourself, you'll know that there's only one answer to tell your friend: love. When your heart throbs it keeps you younger. That's why we're called heartthrobs — duh.

### 9 What is your passion, apart from acting?

Mastering the art of living, which I will never do, so that learning curve keeps me thoroughly occupied.



### 1 What was the last photo you took on your phone?

Mock me, would you, you piss-taking, pointy-eared devil! He knows, gentle readers, that I still use the phone I had in New Zealand in 1999, a Nokia 6310i, which has no camera! Actually I have 11 of them, six working at any given time. Tri-band, almost unbreakable, work anywhere in the world. Downside? Battery life. I'm having to charge mine every nine days now.

### 2 What advice would you give drama students?

This sums up everything involved in a successful entertainment career: "The drama's laws the

drama's patrons give And we, who live to please, must please to live." Learn it. Think about it every day of your working life.

### 3 What's been your happiest moment?

You mean apart from holding my children in my arms, exultation between the sheets, flying a plane into a sweet landing? It must have been working with you, dear chap!

### 4 Do you regret not getting the Fellowship tattoo? There's still time!

Tattoo is herd identification, and I'm not a herd animal. That's not to say I think of any of the Fellowship as herd animals. (Animals, certainly!) If you want to show you can take the pain, give a kidney and save a life!

### 5 Who inspires you?

My father Rhys, an unarmed colonial policeman whom I once saw talk down a mob trying to kill a drunken driver who'd hit and killed a child. There were 300 angry people around him and he must have known how close he was to death, but he was calm and serene and carried the day by his authority. What a gift to give a son! To show moral and physical courage at the same time!

### 6 When you procrastinate, what do you do?

Wot! Me procrastinate? Never! What others may perceive as my procrastination is, of course, deep thought, a detailed and exhaustive analysis of the pros and cons of each question and the myriad multi-faceted implications that might result from any seemingly straightforward utterance. A letter from the IRS is as challenging as a game of postal chess with Korchnoi. It's not procrastination — it's Ent-think. Let Treebeard be your model for such deliberations!

### 7 What is a skill you would like to learn?

Brevity.

### 8 Can you share one memory from your childhood in Tanzania?

I saw a slave ship — a *dhow* — in Dar es Salaam harbour in 1955. Saudi Arabia only abolished slavery ten years later. I have a fury against any religion that justifies slavery. It is an abomination and still widespread.

### 9 If you could be any animal, what would it be?

I see myself as an old silverback gorilla, keeping watch for possible places for ambush, whilst the troop grazes. And there are far too many places for an ambush. More than in my youth.

Glad to see you've learned not to capsize canoes. Though looking at the pictures, I'm glad I'm not hanging out with you these days. Stay the course, my elvish friend. Love to you and yours, and all of the Nine and the Greater Fellowship of fans and readers.

PS Say "hi" to Mum.



THE EMPIRE INTERVIEW

# INTO THE LIGHT

HE LOSES HIMSELF IN HIS  
ROLES, BUT REFUSES TO LOSE  
HIMSELF IN FAME. YET EVEN THE  
CONTRARIAN **CASEY AFFLECK**  
MAY NOT BE ABLE TO AVOID IT  
AFTER *MANCHESTER BY THE SEA*

WORDS NEV PIERCE PORTRAITS MATT HOLYOAK

Casey Affleck, photographed  
exclusively for *Empire* at the  
Corinthia Hotel, London, on  
9 October 2016.











# “SON OF A BITCH!”

Here you are complaining.” Casey Affleck grins as he bounces around a hotel room, comparing sleep-deprivation stories with *Empire*. He wins, having turned in at 2am after flying in from Los Angeles for the BFI London Film Festival screening of *Manchester By The Sea*, written and directed by *You Can Count On Me*’s Kenneth Lonergan. A gripping study of grief, it stars Affleck as a man who returns home after the death of his brother — and reluctantly takes on the role of caring for his teenage nephew, even as he wrestles with his own deep-seated sorrows. Hotly tipped for Oscars glory, it’s piercing, thoughtful, very serious and yet surprisingly funny... all of which function as descriptions of the actor himself.

Affleck has been acting forever. First just as a child in the background, when his mum — a teacher — would take him along to productions shooting in his hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts (about 30 miles away from his latest film’s titular town). “We would go in, sit around craft service, eat doughnuts, get 25 bucks at the end of the day — it was a great treat for a kid.” Gradually it became more serious, although there’s always been a push-me-pull-you element to his career. For every breakthrough role — *To Die For*, *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*, *Gone Baby Gone* — there’s been a step back, a retreat from the movie-star success he’s seen older brother Ben (and childhood friend Matt Damon) enjoy and endure. This is not to mention the pictures where he appeared to be actively trying to repel an audience’s affection, such as his brilliant but brutal turn as sociopathic Texas lawman Lou Ford in Michael Winterbottom’s *The Killer Inside Me*. Now, perhaps, he’s becoming more comfortable with the idea of success. As he settles down to chat, less intense and more forthright than expected, the 41-year-old looks out of the window at a leafy Westminster park, smiles again and observes, “This is a lovely view...”

**You first worked with Kenneth Lonergan in the London production of *This Is Our Youth* in 2002. Was that the beginning of your friendship?**

I knew him already because I had auditioned for his play *Lobby Hero*. Which I really wanted to do. And I would have been really good in! I went to see the very first show of it in previews, when every play is a mess, so I would feel okay about not having got the part. I was like, “Yeah, that sucks! Look at it. Horrible. Thank God they didn’t cast me!” Of course it got much better. That was the first time I met him. Then I was living in Paris and they said, “They’re doing *This Is Our Youth* in London.” I thought, “The motherfucker’s not gonna cast me — he doesn’t like what I do with his writing.” But it was just a train ride away, so I came over and we met. And then I got it. I spent four months with him, which was amazing. This sounds like false flattery, but the only thing better than working with his writing is hanging out with him and talking about his writing. He really understands the characters. He has an answer for why he wrote even the smallest, most insignificant line.

**So the process is as rewarding as the result?**

Some people are brilliant, but everyone around them are their puppets. Whereas he is a brilliant collaborator. He’s open to having long conversations about how to play scenes. He doesn’t mind that you argue with him. And in that way the process becomes something everyone gets something out of. I really mean it when I say that if all of the footage of this movie were erased, I would still be very, very happy that I did it.

**You must have had to think a lot about your family and grief as preparation — did that give you pause?**

About doing the part? No. I knew I wanted to do it. I read the script and thought, “This is a really complicated character. It requires a lot of two really hard things: being very emotional and

then being very restrained.” It’s like he’s squeezing his fists the whole movie.

**Would it be fair to say you really like acting, but not so much the idea of being a star?**

That’s not an aspect that appeals to me. It makes me uncomfortable. I really don’t like all of the publicity and attention that is necessary sometimes, but that’s the price you pay. So far I have the best possible career that I ever could have hoped for. I get to work with people I love and look up to. And, by and large, no-one gives a shit about me when I walk down the street. Very, very rarely do people say something, and if they do, they go, “Oh man, you’re that guy in that movie, right?” And then they’re gone. That’s perfect. There have been times where there’s been a little too much invasion of my personal life. But I only really care if it affects people around me. Sometimes if it invades my kids’ life I think, “Fuck it, I’m gonna quit.”

**Have you ever seriously thought about jacking it in?**

Mmm-mmm. My career has been like waiting to do something you love. And then either it comes along or it doesn’t. If it doesn’t, you take a job for money and it sucks and you think, “I don’t like this career.” Then it’s over and along comes something like *Manchester*. There have been four or five movies in my life that I’ve really loved and have inspired me and kept me doing it.

**Which are?**

*To Die For*, *Assassination Of Jesse James*, *Manchester*, *Ain’t Them Bodies Saints*...

**Adam Wingard, the director of *The Guest* and *Blair Witch*, told us *Gerry* is his go-to inspirational film. He takes it everywhere. Oh, that’s weird!**

**It basically involves you and Matt Damon, both playing a character named Gerry, wandering endlessly around a desert.**

**What’s your memory of making it?**

That was one of those experiences, like the last movie I did with David Lowery [*Ain’t Them Bodies Saints*], that is really liberating and a great reminder of what it’s supposed to feel like to make a movie — where you’re able to make creative decisions as they occur to you. It sounds sort of obvious, but it’s so rare in movies because they’re such a gigantic beast of a thing. Don Cheadle says it’s like trying to stop a dinosaur. You know, when you’re on set and you go, “Oh, wait a minute, this scene shouldn’t be in the bathtub — we should be fighting in front of the building.” And people look at you like you’re crazy. You have to move all the equipment. It’ll take five hours to get that set up outside, you know? On *Gerry*, there was no dinosaur. [Cinematographer] Harris Savides was shooting it. We found this old Argentinean guy and his three sons and that was our crew. We were off on our own, no-one was paying attention to us. And although we did have a script, at one

Grooming: Rebecca Afford @ Schneider Entertainment Agency. Stylist: Abena Ofei. Black slim fit shirt by Canali at Mr Porter. Blue self-stripe trousers (part of suit) by Brunello Cucinelli. Brown leather lace-ups by Brunello Cucinelli. Previous page: Black wool, double-breasted overcoat by Dries Van Noten at Harvey Nichols. Blue self stripe suit by Brunello Cucinelli. White cotton shirt by Alexander McQueen at MatchesFashion. Brown leather lace-ups by Brunello Cucinelli



point we said, "Okay, fuck the script. We're not following anything." For better or for worse. I don't know, some people watch that movie and think it's just a giant waste of celluloid!

**The last time you had reviews as positive as you've had for your new film was for *Jesse James* and *Gone Baby Gone* in 2007. But instead of milking it, you devoted two years to directing *I'm Still Here*. How do you feel about that choice now?**

I haven't seen it in a long time. The last time I watched it I thought, "There's a million things to change." A good way to make something you're not happy with is never show it to anyone until you release it! Because you learn a lot from showing it to an audience. But I didn't do that. I showed it once to some friends, then suddenly I was sitting in the Venice Film Festival showing it to a thousand Italians who had no idea what was going on. I thought it was a broad comedy. And no-one laughed. And I still think it was a comedy. I mean, Joaquin [Phoenix, who played a version of himself, having a nervous breakdown] and I have a pretty similar sense of humour. We thought we were making something in the vein of *iThree Amigos!* or *The Big Lebowski*. That movie's only success may be that it felt very real. A couple of weeks ago someone I met said, "Dude, I saw that documentary. What happened to that guy?" I didn't even know where to begin to explain! But I take it as a compliment, because it achieved a certain level of authenticity. I have two regrets about it, though. First, that it took so much time, because I was starting to feel strong as an actor. I got kind of rusty and cold, and I spent all my money making that movie, so then I was broke and had to go back and do a whole bunch of movies I didn't like, just to earn a living. So it wasn't a smart, strategic career move. But I very rarely made smart, strategic career moves. I make decisions out of passion.

**What's your other regret?**

That people were sort of just pissed off by it. It never feels good to have people be mad at you. I'm very self-conscious about that. And people really had a bad reaction to the movie, especially the media, because they thought we were trying to be clever — in a kind of, "We're smarter than you, we're gonna trick you," Ali G kind of a way. And that wasn't the intention at all. I never thought anyone would actually take it seriously.

**It's interesting that bothers you, because — and this isn't meant as an insult to either of you — the big difference between you and your brother Ben on screen is that he seems to be someone who likes to be liked, while that doesn't appear to concern you. Is that true?** Oh yeah, that's fair. At least about me. I can't speak for him and his inner drive. But I don't make choices as an actor out of a need to be liked. I know actors talk about parts like, "Is this character likeable?" I don't find that that interesting. But as a person, and I guess this is thanks to my mom, I have a pretty thick skin. People say bad shit about



me — "He's a terrible actor", "He's an asshole" — and I can kind of brush it off. I know who I am. I'm trying to be a good person and do my best and that's all there is to it. But what I don't want is to make people angry. That doesn't feel good.

**Kenneth Lonergan has observed that, "Casey makes you do hundreds of takes because he won't stop until you tell him to go home." Why do you want to do things again and again and again?**

I just think there are so many different ways to do it! Especially when you're working with good material, it feels like you could endlessly do it in the same way that they endlessly do *Hamlet*. You know, "This is a very rich, complicated text. So let's try it this way with that colour and this colour." You can just keep combining colours and it gives you a different version. Also, I guess I keep doing it because it's fun. There's too little time spent on most movies actually doing the thing you're supposed to be doing. There's a lot of time setting it up, sitting around, planning it. I feel like, boy, once they actually get the camera there and they dress the set and light it and everyone's quiet, the sound is rolling, I wanna just keep doing it until someone makes me go home. 🍷

**MANCHESTER BY THE SEA IS IN CINEMAS FROM 13 JANUARY**

**Top:** Affleck with Michelle Williams, as his estranged wife, in *Manchester By The Sea*. **Middle:** The titular faintheart in *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*. **Bottom:** Alongside Rooney Mara in *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*.

ADDITIONAL IMAGES: ALAMY

Blue self stripe suit by Brunello Cucinelli. White cotton shirt by Alexander McQueen at MatchesFashion. Blue multi print silk tie by Louis Vuitton. Brown leather lace-ups by Brunello Cucinelli







# THE

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# GIFTS

FROM *STAR WARS* TO *STAR TREK*  
AND BEYOND, HERE ARE THE BEST  
STOCKING FILLERS IN THE GALAXY

PHOTOGRAPHY WILSON HENNESSY

## PLAYSTATION VR ◀

The future of gaming is here and it involves you flailing around your living room with your eyes covered as you coo (or scream) at disturbingly lifelike virtual worlds. Insider tip: stick it on your brother's head and load up the safe-sounding *Kitchen*. Then time how long it takes for him to rip the headset off his face in sheer terror. £349.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)





### ROLLIN' WITH THE HOMIES PIN ▲

Twenty-one years on from Cher's ill-fated match-making, one of *Clueless*' catchphrases is captured here in a lapel pin. And if that one's not your bag, there's a wide range of other pop-culture pins you can check out instead, referencing films from *Misery* to *The Babadook*.

£8.17 (\$10), [pattilapel.myshopify.com](http://pattilapel.myshopify.com)

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Essentially Siri for your home. A hands-free speaker with 360° audio that plays music and audiobooks, and gives reports on the news, weather and traffic (should you require that service while sitting in your kitchen). All you have to do is ask.

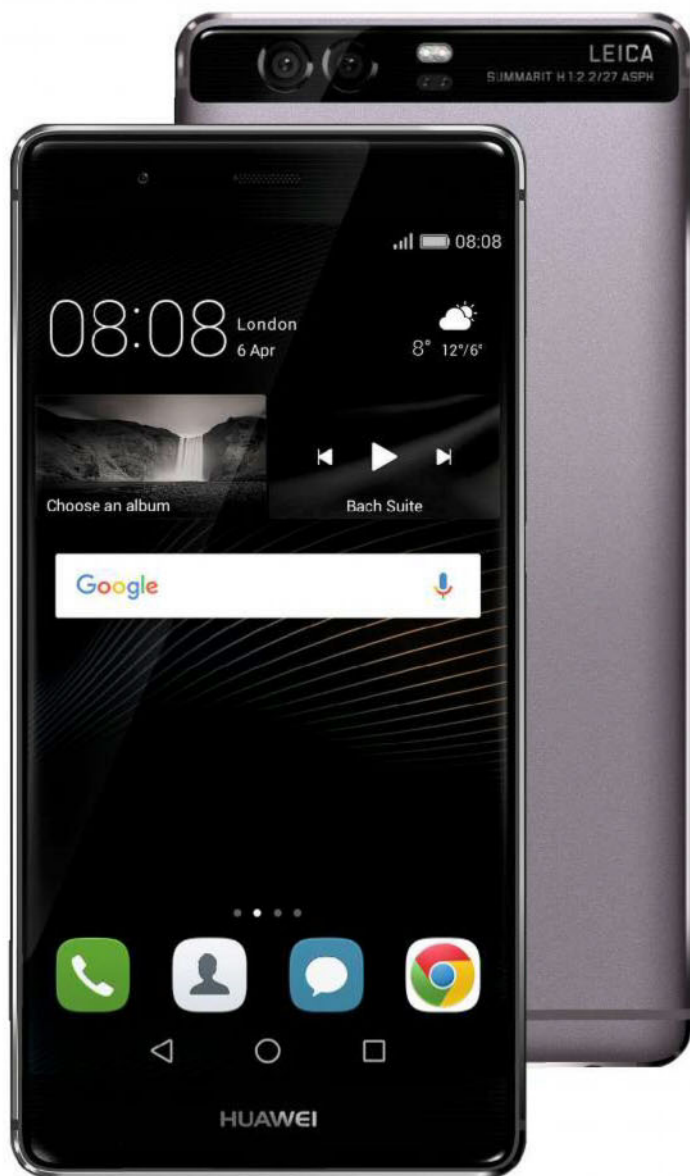
£149.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



### LEGO DEATH STAR ◀

Especially redesigned for 2016, the new LEGO Death Star includes Darth Vader's TIE Advanced Starfighter and an amazing 23 minifigures, including everyone's favourite — the dianoga, the creature that lives in the trash compactor. Less popular characters however — Han, Luke, Leia, etc — are also in the box. £399.99, [shop.lego.com](http://shop.lego.com)





### HUAWEI P9 ◀

Blurry photos are no good to anyone, whether you're capturing treasured memories or trying to boost your likes on Instagram. Step forward phone giant Huawei — with camera masters Leica it has created a smartphone that boasts dual lenses, making colours pop and offering better clarity. Social-media mastery beckons.

£449.99, [consumer.huawei.com](http://consumer.huawei.com)



### PANDEMIC LEGACY: SEASON 1 ▶

Attempting to save humanity from plagues may not be Uncle Colin's first choice for Christmas fun, but that's fine — he's not invited. A co-operative 'box-set' board game that sees you fight four diseases over the course of a year, this puts *Monopoly* firmly in its place — gathering dust in a cupboard.

£64.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



### TITANFALL 2 ◀

Much has changed since the first *Titanfall*. Not least that there's now a single-player campaign to complement the fast-paced online shooting that, instead of being an afterthought, should be handed out to FPS developers with a Post-it note attached saying, "This is how you do it."

From £39.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



### SAMSUNG UE60KS7000 TV ◀

Bcating a whopping 60" screen and with two times the brightness levels of conventional UHD televisions, Samsung's latest offering brings out details in the murkiest of shadows. Reason enough to rethink the layout of your living room.

£1,499, [samsung.com](http://samsung.com)

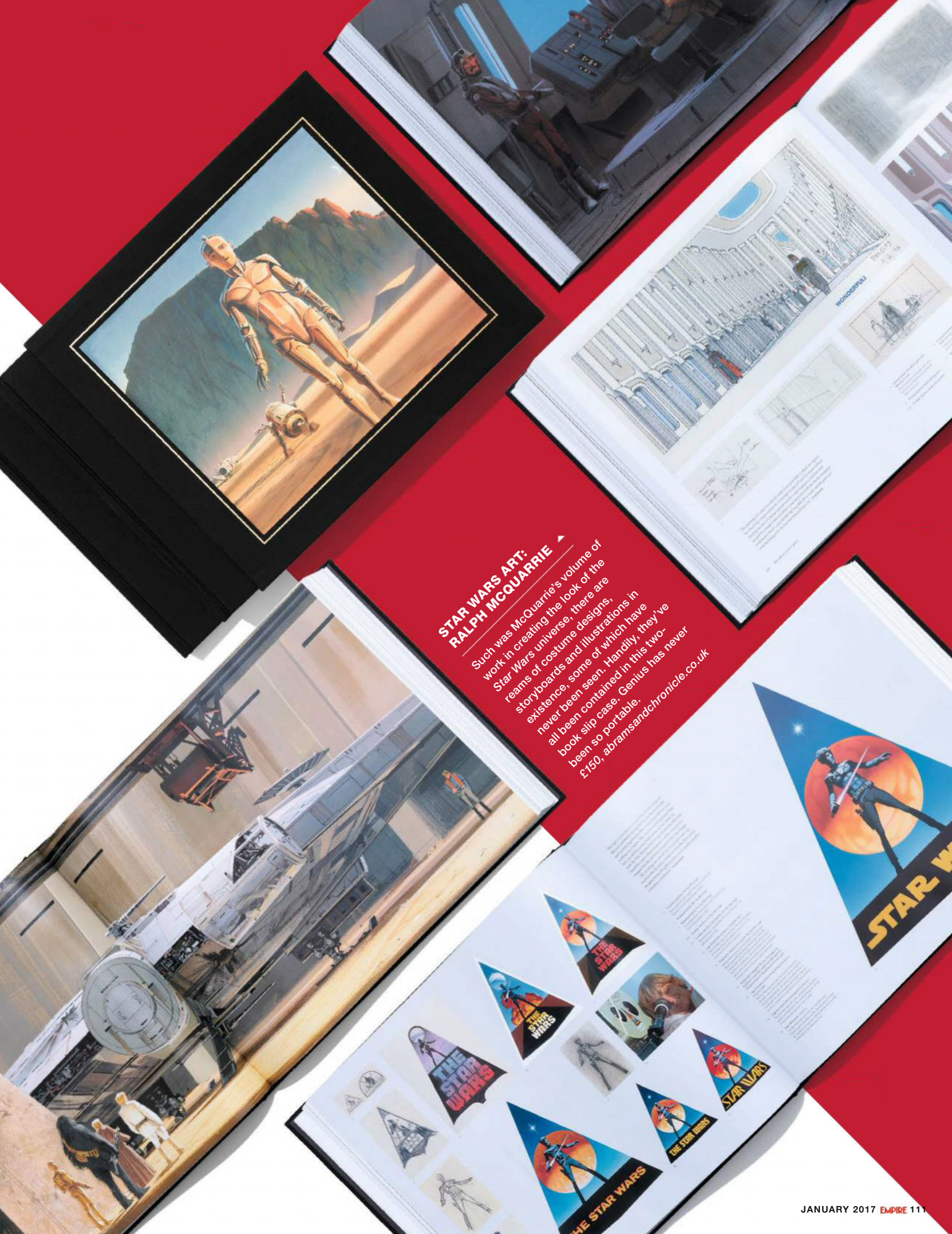
### PREACHER JESSE CUSTER POP! VINYL ▶

There's an immediate question that springs to mind on hearing the news that there's a new *Preacher* range of Pop! Vinyl figures, and we're here to answer it: yes, Arseface is indeed part of the series. And yes, it does look pretty gross.

£9.99, [zavvi.com](http://zavvi.com)







## STAR WARS ART: RALPH MCGUARRIE

Such was McQuarrie's volume of work in creating the look of the Star Wars universe, there are reams of costume designs, storyboards and illustrations in existence, some of which have never been seen. Handily, they've all been contained in this two-book slip case. Genius has never been so portable.

£150, [abramsandchronicle.co.uk](http://abramsandchronicle.co.uk)





#### APPLE WATCH SERIES 2 ▀

Apple's next-generation watch is here and has been improved enough to make you consider shelling out a second time. Water-resistant to 50 metres, with built-in GPS and improved brightness to nail readability outdoors, it will prove particularly handy when you're lost. In the dark. In a swimming pool. From £269, [apple.com/uk](http://apple.com/uk)





### CONVERSE CHUCK TAYLOR ALL STAR '70 DC COMICS BATMAN

Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Frank Miller comic book *The Dark Knight Returns*, Converse has adorned its classic high-top with artwork from the past 77 years of Batman comic strips. The only issue being they're too damn good to wear. £90, [converse.com](http://converse.com)



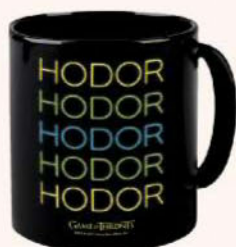
### STAR WARS: ROGUE ONE SCARIF T-SHIRT

Retro-styled T-shirt featuring the tropical paradise of Scarif Beach — an ideal holiday destination. Or at least it would be if it weren't for those pesky Imperial troops bashing around the place yelling something about protecting a new space station. Perhaps we should go somewhere safer. What's Alderaan like at this time of year? £16.99, [emp.co.uk](http://emp.co.uk)



### STAR TREK 50TH ANNIVERSARY LIMITED EDITION

Love *Star Trek* but have somehow failed to buy any of the original series or six films featuring Kirk's crew? Then, in that unlikely event, this is the set for you. And even if you have, the addition of the animated series make this a worthy double dip. From £135, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



### GAME OF THRONES NEON HODOR MUG

It's a time-honoured tradition that noble sacrifices such as Hodor's are commemorated. Once it was done in song or by passing down tales of their great deeds through the generations. Now we do it via novelty mugs. £11.99, [hboshopeco.com](http://hboshopeco.com)



### STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS BIG SLEEVE EDITION

Looks like it's a vinyl record. Isn't a vinyl record. The big sleeve actually houses the film on Blu-ray, DVD and a bonus disc, plus limited edition art prints. Ideal for displaying, either on a shelf or in a frame. Just be sure to store the discs elsewhere first. £19.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



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# RE.VIEW

THE INDISPENSABLE GUIDE TO HOME ENTERTAINMENT

EDITED BY CHRIS HEWITT







# THE EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

## STAR TREK BEYOND

**Boldly going into the sci-fi sequel with writers Simon Pegg and Doug Jung**

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT



### 00.04.13

**966 DAYS** — When we meet up with the crew of the Starship Enterprise, they're three years into their five-year mission. Or 966 days, to be precise. "We realised that would be fun, because 966 was relevant to the 50th anniversary," says Simon Pegg, the film's co-writer. (The original series of *Star Trek* aired in September of 1966.) "We never saw what happened to Kirk & co beyond this point, because the show got cancelled. So we filled the gap." >



**STAR TREK  
BEYOND**

★★★★

CERT 12

**What we said:** "Here is a movie where the emphasis is on good, old-fashioned fun, and that feels, in a good way, almost like an extended episode of the *Trek* TV show."

**Notable extras:** Numerous featurettes, deleted scenes and an iTunes-only enhanced commentary.





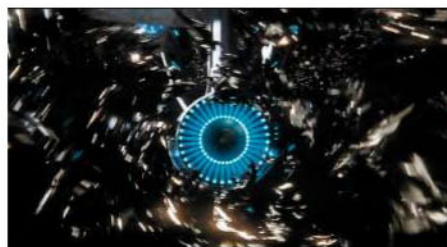
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**THE OTHER MR SULU** \_\_ When the Enterprise docks at Yorktown, John Cho's Lt Sulu is met by his daughter and husband. In case you missed the hubbub upon release, Sulu is gay. But even if not, you might not have realised husband Ben is played by co-writer Doug Jung. "That was not by design," laughs Jung. "John had requested an Asian actor for that role, and the pool for that is limited in Dubai [where those scenes were shot]."



00.12.04

**FAREWELL, SPOCK** \_\_ Also at Yorktown, Spock (Zachary Quinto) receives the sad news that his future self, Leonard Nimoy's Ambassador Spock, has passed away. Pegg and Jung had just started planning the movie when Nimoy died in February 2015. "We thought it made absolute sense to make his passing a part of the movie in a very meaningful way," says Pegg. "It was just beautifully poetic."



00.19.14

**THE SWARM** \_\_ While answering a distress call on the other side of a nebula, the Enterprise is shocked by a savage attack from the villainous Krall (Idris Elba) and his drone army. Jung says the idea stemmed from a desire to challenge the "assymetrical warfare" that had previously defined *Trek*. "Why is it that two ships end up across from each other in the vastness of space? Why don't they have a smaller ship that goes after them?"



00.32.07

**THE SHIP HITS THE FAN** \_\_ Outmatched by the swarm, Kirk orders the evacuation of the Enterprise and watches as his ship is abandoned on the planet Altamid. "I remember having stand-up rows with Justin Lin about it, because we've seen it before [in *The Search For Spock* and *Generations*]," says Pegg of the death of the Enterprise. "But Justin said, 'I want to take away the thing that bonds the crew together.' I realised he was right."



00.39.01

**SPOCK SWEARS!** \_\_ "It's always a joyous moment when you see Spock's humanity get the better of him slightly," says Pegg of the moment when Spock, beginning to feel the effects of a sucking stomach wound, swears. Or, to be more precise, says, "Horseshit." Later, he will even weep, and laugh at one of Bones' jokes. "He's so delirious that he allows his humanity to surface. His swearing is a glitchy pre-cursor to that."



01.31.51

**FANTASTIC BEASTIES** \_\_ The film's stand-out moment sees Kirk and crew, now aboard the newly fixed (old starship) USS Franklin, thwart Krall and his swarm by blasting a disruptive frequency. "Originally it was soul classic *Big Bird*," says Pegg, adding that initially Krall was revealed as a hoarder of Earth memorabilia. "Justin's idea was Beastie Boys' *Sabotage* — it was in the first movie, and as a song you can't get more on the nose."



01.38.18

**KRALL UNVEILED** \_\_ Uhura (Zoe Saldana) discovers that Krall is actually Balthazar Edison, the centuries-old captain of the USS Franklin, a starship presumed lost. This shot, one of the few where Elba isn't caked in make-up, was a late addition. "Initially it was a crew photograph," says Pegg. "What Zoe's reacting to, what we shot on the day, was a picture of Edison. We wanted to make sure the moment was hammered home."



01.50.39

**FOR ANTON** \_\_ "It still doesn't feel real," says Pegg of the tragic death of Anton Yelchin, just a few weeks before the film's release in July. Reeling from events, Lin re-edited the film's final toast so the line, "To absent friends," now plays over a shot of Yelchin. "That line was in the movie because we lose a number of crewmates," adds Pegg. "Justin dug out all of Anton's coverage and cut that into the film. I'm so proud of him for doing that."



01.58.08

**NEW ENTERPRISE** \_\_ The film ends with the rebirth of the Enterprise, as it launches into space on its maiden voyage. "We did talk about redesigning the Enterprise," says Pegg. But, mindful of fan feedback, it was decided to leave well alone. "You can only push your luck so far."

STAR TREK BEYOND IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD





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# THE EMPIRE MASTERPIECE

## BAMBI

Disney's greatest work of fawn fiction

1942 / CERT U  
WORDS IAN NATHAN

LET'S GET SOMETHING straight. *Bambi* remains the most primal piece of cinema there has ever been, the key work in Walt Disney's rapturous early phase, proof that the animated greats were not gentle, folksy lullabies but a test of our psychic mettle. It was at Uncle Walt's knee — specifically this tale of a whitetail fawn's growing pains — that children first comprehended their parents could die. And QED: so could they. No other film gets close to the existential vertigo of *Bambi*.

Walt had considered adapting Austrian Felix Salten's novel *Bambi, A Life In The Woods* as his second animated feature, buying the rights from MGM who had been unable to fathom what to do with this grim (but not Grimm) Germanic

tale of a deer's wake-up call. Disney found the story too sombre, though, and seeking a lifelike carriage in his animals had been unimpressed by early animation tests. With three more animated classics under his belt by 1942 — most significantly *Dumbo*, daring to confine the flying elephant's mother to the pachyderm asylum — he had developed his storytelling skills sufficiently to thread a way through the woods.

Following *Fantasia*, *Bambi* continued Disney's drift into abstraction, relying heavily on composers Frank Churchill and Edward H. Plumb's shoplifting of Vivaldi. The purity of purpose is what is so effective. *Bambi* may be a prince, but this is no family saga, no homily to being true to oneself, and despite the presence



Don't bother making friends, Bambi, we all die in the end.



of BFF Thumper and his jackhammer of a back paw, not a buddy movie. The storyline could be scribbled on the back of a rabbit's foot. It's the circle of life: a journey told season to season, from birth to parenthood.

*Bambi* is a fantasy — the animals speak sparingly in irritating bubblegum voices — but one true to the spirit of nature. There had been a discussion about talking leaves and comedy ant farms, but it was Walt, a stickler for sense, who decreed such trifles implausible.

The painterly backdrops, based upon the woodlands of Vermont and Maine, verge on illustrations. The look is a symphony of pastels, nothing too heavy, with smoky blue distances and enchanted foregrounds. But it's an edgy

enchantment. The singsong rainstorm with gilded droplets bouncing off leaves cracks into a thunderstorm. The ice proves slippery. The game is subtle but cruel: allowing us to feel continual threat then reassure us that mother is there to protect us. For now...

**LIKE ALL THE** great horror movies, we are forewarned of the shock to come. "Man was in the forest," cautions Bambi's fretful mother. How well the film captures the neurotic biology of being perpetual prey. Returning to the film, it's like awaiting the chestbuster in *Alien*.

Winter has fallen upon the forest, a blizzard gathers pace and, well, you know the rest. That timorous call: "Mother? Mother?" The uncaring snow thickening as Bambi trails on, finally to be greeted by a father not about to soften the blow: "Your mother can't be with you anymore."

A thousand voices cried out from the stalls and refused to be silenced. Where has his mummy gone? Lives transformed forever.

*Bambi* is veiled in vulnerability and a poetic strangeness, and Walt may have shied away from the scene as planned, where the animators would actually show the mother die. But Disney built an empire on the corpses of dead parents. Of course, fairy tales from time immemorial have happily sacrificed Ma or Pa in the name of narrative punch. Reams of psychological research have speculated on culture's role in confronting death. "In shorthand, it's much quicker to have characters grow up when you bump off their parents," said Don Hahn, producer of *The Lion King*, which of course essentially rebooted *Bambi* with lashings of *Hamlet* and comedy warthogs. In the late '30s Walt had moved his parents into a Hollywood show home kitted out with all the mod cons, but a tragic carbon monoxide leak led to his mother's death, and he never stopped blaming himself. *Bambi* was attempted exorcism.

If a hunter's bullet didn't strike the fledgling audience to their marrow, Walt then tells them about sex. He's a tad circumspect, christening the effect as being "twitterpated", but there is something fruity in the spring air.

His voice broken, our hero emerges from another winter a handsome devil. He's traded in his cute spots for a pair of antlers, and for a brief, magical interlude the film becomes zany as Bambi flits on figurative clouds with shapely Faline. But the respite is brief. Conflict returns in a formidable, noir-tinged shadow dance where Bambi ruts with a rival. And just as he's entered a stable relationship, the whole forest goes up in flames. Swirls of hand-drawn fire, like Van Gogh's fireworks, fills the screen, and the film is riven by panic and aglow with red death.

So don't buy that happy ending for a second. Bambi's twin offspring face their own grapple with survival. Winter is coming. Existence is struggle, happiness fleeting, trauma inevitable, the future uncertain. You know, for kids.

**BAMBI IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

## KIDS WATCH CLASSICS

### Big films tackled by little people

ILLUSTRATION OLLY GIBBS



#### ELLA BERRY – 10 IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

##### What did you think of the film?

It touches your heart, and makes people think if you put other people before you that's good, and if you think everything you do doesn't matter, you're wrong.

##### Was that the first black-and-white movie you've seen?

Yeah, I didn't think I was going to like it. I thought it would be people rolling off cliffs and tied to train tracks but then it turned out to be really good.

##### What was your favourite bit?

I liked the bit at the beginning when the stars were talking to each other and the bit when the dance floor opened and there was a swimming pool underneath. I wish we had that at our school.

##### How did you feel about the choices George Bailey made?

I loved him. Ever since he was a little boy he's put people first. I liked all the choices he made apart from the bits when he thought it would be better without him or he decided to kill himself.

##### Who was your favourite character?

I loved Clarence — he would be such a good guardian angel to have.

##### What did you think of Mr Potter?

He was really mean. It's weird because I never thought someone called Potter would be bad because of Harry Potter.

##### How did you feel when George saw what life would be like without him?

I hated it. There were people being drunk, fighting, loads of bad stuff.

##### Did you feel emotional at the end?

I cried. They all gave him money and he realised how much he meant to everyone.

##### And what rating would you give it?

Four stars. If it was in colour, five.





# SIX REASONS TO WATCH YONDERLAND

By the people who make it

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

Kraftwerk like  
clockwork: Laurence  
Rickard, Mathew  
Baynton, Ben  
Willbond and  
Simon Farnaby.

IF YOU HAVEN'T seen *Yonderland*, Skyl's fantasy-tinged sitcom from the original *Horrible Histories* gang, then we'll cut to the chase: you're missing one of the most inventive, surreal and, crucially, hilarious TV comedies of recent years. Still not convinced? Well, think of it as *Monty Python* meets *Labyrinth*. And if you're somehow still on the fence, we asked its six creators/writers/stars to pick their favourite moments from its three series to date...

## 'THE INTERROGATION' (S1, E3)

CHOSEN BY MATHEW BAYNTON

As bounty hunters interrogating the monks who cannot lie, me and Jim Howick decided we wanted to both be made up like Dennis Hopper in *Easy Rider*. Their dialogue was threatening but we started imagining their backstory and they became a couple with a long history. We were really excited to get to set and see how the others responded to it. That's the great fun of working in a gang — we get to fill every tiny role with detail that, for us, makes every scene a chance to have fun and make each other laugh.

## 'THE KRAFTWERK PARODY' (S2, E6)

CHOSEN BY JIM HOWICK

We were always very aware of how popular the songs in *Horrible Histories* were, so when we started making *Yonderland* it was a no-brainer

that the show should have a musical element of some kind. In this episode we wanted to create a fantasy version of state security that Debbie (disguised as a crone) comes face-to-face with as she tries to cross a border checkpoint. We really liked the idea of the guards having monotone accents and applying painfully careful examinations. Four guards in a row? Fastidiously groomed in Stasi-like uniforms? The perfect opportunity for a Kraftwerk parody. You've got to take those. So we wrote a song loosely based on their hit *The Robots*, and Philip Pope composed the music. It's safe to say we indulged ourselves. A lot.

## 'THE SUPERHERO SPOOF' (S3, E3)

CHOSEN BY BEN WILLBOND

We'd started to talk about superheroes and really wanted to get them into *Yonderland*, but it's hard to do because the series is getting really story-heavy. We came up with this concept of a vigilante called The Bird [Baynton]. I just really wanted to do an opening where it would start in a brooding *Batman* style on a rooftop and then there's a guy at the window going, "Seriously, mate, what are you doing?" I was massively sleep-deprived at the time with my second child, hence the guy has got loads of babies. Larry said, "Why isn't he just a creature?" So we came up with a dog who had loads of babies, the worst-

case scenario. The payoff of the roof being at floor height is one of my favourite comic beats.

## 'THE CAKE WAR' (S3, E4)

CHOSEN BY MARTHA HOWE-DOUGLAS

Basically, this is our take on *The Great British Bake Off*, with three of the boys — Jim, Ben and Larry — dressed up as WI-type women. They each think the other has sabotaged their cake efforts, and basically start a full-on war. It's ridiculous. We're in trenches and firing machine guns and grenades at each other, and it's utterly ridiculous. I was absolutely pissing myself. The amount of takes we had to do... it took so long to film because I couldn't keep a straight face.

## 'THE QGM' (S2, E5)

CHOSEN BY SIMON FARNABY

This was actually a touchstone idea we'd had when we were creating the show, to have an AGM — the Quillenial General Meeting — for evil overlords. Like people who work for Nokia have at a Radisson, but for baddies. I had been Negatus the evil overlord since Series 1, but now the others had free rein to design their own. For example, Matt made a ludicrous choice to have Don Corleone-style cotton wool in his mouth, which he instantly regretted. I think you can tell a lot about someone from the type of baddy they'd like to be.





The Bird (Baynton) with Rickard's weary dog-man. Below: Jim Howick in 'The Cake War'. Bottom: Debbie (Martha Howe-Douglas) and the Elders plan a heist.



## 'THE CHAMBER BREAK-IN' (S3, E2)

CHOSEN BY LAURENCE RICKARD

As a film nut, writing an *Ocean's Eleven*-style heist was a complete joy. It starts with a tremendously silly joke, as three armed guards with unlikely names greet each other ("Michael"/"Douglas"/"Kirk"/"Douglas"), and then cuts to one of my favourite Jim Howick performances, as he acts out his own horrific death, in far too much detail. I'll never forget the amount of corpsing when shooting that. Even in the cut, you can see how close our faces are to cracking.

YONDERLAND SERIES 3 IS OUT ON 5 DECEMBER ON DVD. THE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL IS ON SKY1 ON 24 DECEMBER

# KIM NEWMAN'S VIDEO DUNGEON

The good, the bad, the ugly of DTV — all must be judged by our Dungeon Master



## THE BREAK-OUT: EVIL GAMES

Spanish-born Adrián García Bogliano's Mexican-made *Evil Games* (formerly entitled *Scherzo Diabolico*) is a (very) black comic thriller/mystery in the tradition of *The Vanishing* and the Korean vengeance films of Park Chan-wook. It takes its refined, chilly tone, peculiarly, from a CD of classic piano pieces, which not only provide a civilised counterpoint to the genteelly savage action but turn out to be a crucial plot point.

Aram (Francisco Barreiro), a buttoned-down office worker, quietly and covertly practises for a criminal act — he tests out choke-holds on his senile father (who he trusts won't remember the assault), runs through snatching and carrying off a person with his young son as test subject and times the walk home from school of teenage Anabella (Daniela Soto Vell). He kidnaps the girl and

confines her in a disused building, taking video clips of her looking afraid or stripping naked. Gradually, it emerges that Aram is not a random psycho, like the villains of most tied-up-in-the-cellar films, but a calculating, ruthless creep with another, complicated agenda. However,

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Well, if we're going to be attacked by monsters, I'm sure glad they're dumb as shit." *Terrordactyl*

Anabella turns out not to be as easy to manipulate as all the other people in the villain's life — and in the last act, that CD triggers a nastily ironic turn.

Barreiro is creepily good as the sociopathic salaryman, and Vell does well by the extreme arc of the ordinary girl shaped into something else by her ordeal. Bogliano might well become a modern master — like his first US-made feature, the unusual werewolf movie *Late Phases* (aka *Night Of The Wolf*), *Evil Games* is an effective combination of suspense thrills and weird character development.

## THE ROUND-UP: SHARKS ATTACK

As ever, mutant shark fanciers are spoiled for choice, if not exactly quality. A big splash is made by the Roger Corman-produced *Sharktopus Vs Pteracuda*, in which a barracuda/pterodactyl hybrid created by mad entrepreneur Robert Carradine to replace drone warfare battles the returning shark-octopus hybrid. *Shark Lake* offers an irresistible come-on of 'Dolph Lundgren versus a shark', but doesn't deliver: Dolph spends more time bonding with his estranged daughter than thumping fish.

In *Sharkenstein*, the brain of Frankenstein's Monster is put into a shark. The budget is so low that the cracked

potential of the premise is wasted. And *Shark Exorcist* is the worst film of the year — failing even to attain feature length. Watching films like these is like searching for Bigfoot — you set out not believing they actually exist, then profoundly regret you're wrong when you encounter them.

Catch of the bunch, then, is *Summer Shark Attack*: the CGI sharks are rubbish, a severed arm is reused for a whole bunch of characters (including a black dude — though it's a white arm) and the plot is rote, but it has likeable characters. MVP is Allisyn Ashley Arm as a sulky emo who turns teen Ahab when a shark eats her grandma.



# Slough

- 01 More convenient than a Tesco Express,  
 02 Close to Windsor but the property's less.  
 It keeps the business of Britain great,  
 03 It's got Europe's biggest trading estate.  
 It doesn't matter where you're from,  
 You wanna work? Then come along!  
 04 The station's just got a new floor,  
 05 And the motorway runs by your door.

- And you know just where you're headin'  
 06 It's equidistant 'tween London and Reading.  
 07 Oh Slough - my kinda town  
 I don't know how,  
 08 Anyone could put you down.

- To the west you've got Taplow and Bray,  
 You've got Millingdon the other way. 09  
 It's a brilliant place to live and work,  
 It was in Bucks now officially it's Berks. 10  
 Don't believe what the critics say,  
 Like it's soulless and boring and grey. 11  
 See for yourself, what you waiting for?  
 12 We're on the Bath Road, that's the A4.

13 Slough (x3) Oh, Slough ♡





# PUTTING THE SOUL IN SLOUGH

Ricky Gervais dissects the lyrics of David Brent

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

**THE STAND-OUT OF** *David Brent: Life On The Road*, Ricky Gervais' long-awaited follow-up to *The Office*, was undoubtedly the many songs 'written' by Brent. And our favourite track was the heartfelt *Slough*, Brent's love letter to his hometown. So we asked Gervais to talk us through the lyrics.

**01** — "Brent would be very proud of that lyric. The first compliment about Slough is that it's in a good place. A place doesn't choose where it is."

**02** — "This is an accidental diss. There's always a reason why the property in one area is a lot less than the property in another. I know people who pretend that their address is Windsor because it's just on the border."

**03** — "It's a little throwback to *The Office*, the line about a trading estate."

**04** — "That is true. Brent is very proud that everything in this song is factually accurate. Brent is such a man out of time — nobody cares about facts anymore."

**05** — "The second diss. This is not a good thing. He's accidentally painting a very grey, industrialised picture of Slough. The boasts are not very sexy."

**06** — "I'm very proud of this lyric. I don't think, outside of 15th-century folk music, there's ever been a 'tween' in a rock song and I know there's never been equidistant. It's Brent's lovely attempt to be erudite and articulate and interesting, and he blows it."

**07** — "He's ripping off Sinatra, with *My Kind Of Town*. I'm not one to diss Slough, but Chicago is, historically, a cooler, more vibrant place. I'm playing with Brent trying to be sexy here."

**08** — "He's still fed up with John Betjeman [whose poem, *Slough*, begins, "Come, friendly bombs, and fall on Slough"]. He's never let that go."

**09** — "I chuckled when I thought of this lyric. But I do like that small-town mentality, where you do know all of those places around you. I like that, that your small world is big to you. That's very highfalutin, isn't it, for a dopey song about Slough?"

**10** — "Nothing rhymes with Berkshire. I cheated a little bit. It's pronounced Berkshire, but they say 'Berks', as opposed to 'Barks'. So it's a totally valid rhyme — I won't have a word said against it."

**11** — "If you're doing a love letter in a song, don't put in the terrible things people say about it. He didn't have to bring that up. It's like going up to someone and saying, 'I know everyone thinks you're a twat, but I don't.'"

**12** — "He had to say the official number for the Bath Road. He's very excited about that. I love that Brent gets bogged down with admin. It's sweet."

**13** — "And repeat to fade. The important thing is that these are not comedy songs. They're serious songs by a comedy character, who can't write brilliant songs. He's not aware these songs are funny. David Brent thinks they're Springsteen or Dylan songs. But who's going to take a 55-year-old sales rep seriously?"

DAVID BRENT: LIFE ON THE ROAD IS OUT ON 12 DECEMBER ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD. THE DAVID BRENT SONGBOOK IS OUT NOW



DAVID BRENT:  
LIFE ON  
THE ROAD  
★★  
CERT 15

**What we said:** "Gervais very much plays the hits in an undercooked but occasionally funny big-screen revival that suffers from a crippling case of déjà vu."

**Notable extras:** Gervais commentary, making of documentary, outtakes and Brent music videos.

MAN ON  
TRAIN

The bit-part players who stand out



TOMAS LEMARQUIS IN  
X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

MAY 2014. ICELANDIC actor Tómas Lemarquis is working on a music video in Poland (Artur Rojek's *Syreny* — currently at 8.5 million hits on YouTube). Bored during his down time, he wanders into a local multiplex to catch *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*. "I'd never been a comic nerd and I'd never seen any of the other *X-Men* movies," he tells *Empire*, "but I loved it. I said to myself, 'I want to be in these films.'"

And as if by magic, Lemarquis found himself on the Vancouver set of Bryan Singer's *X-Men: Apocalypse* almost exactly 12 months later as the amoral Caliban, a mutant with the ability to track others of his kind. It's not a huge role — he dallies briefly with Oscar Isaac's *Apocalypse*, Jennifer Lawrence's *Mystique* and Olivia Munn's *Psylocke* — but Lemarquis certainly made an impact as the "quirky and funny" cueball. "I would love to continue," he enthuses. "I hope they bring Caliban back." (We didn't have the heart to tell him that they do just that in *Logan*, with Stephen Merchant in the role.)

Lemarquis' striking appearance has meant a CV full of oddball roles, like *Snowpiercer*'s Egg-Head, but he's confident in a versatility that transcends his look. He studied theatre in Paris and Reykjavík and speaks five languages, and his breakout role was as the titular Nóri Albínó in the 2003 Icelandic slacker comedy. "I've been slowly, slowly building my career since then," he says. "I'd like to be able to make smaller movies and big blockbusters, too." He laughs. "Tilda Swinton is my business model." He's not alone in that.

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD



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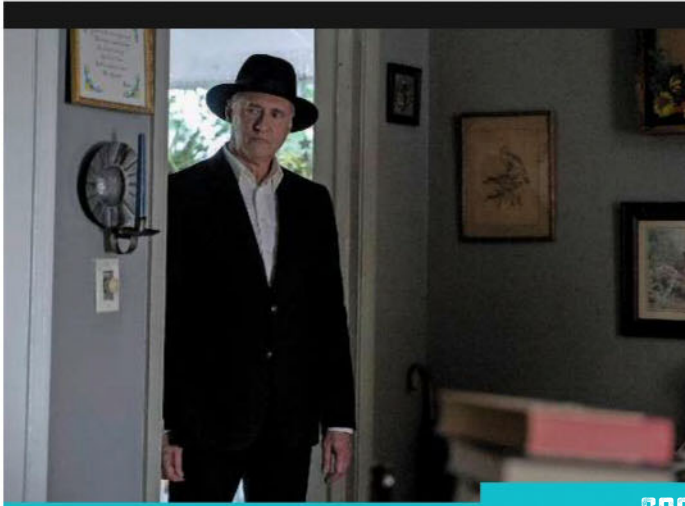
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# BEST OF TIMES | WORST OF TIMES

BRENT SPINER

WORDS JAMES WHITE



## COSTUME

I'm working with a pretty cool costume right now on the TV series *Outcast*. I'm a mysterious character who wears a black suit and a black hat. I look much more threatening and interesting than I ever have before. Certainly more interesting than I did when I was wearing gold make-up!

The first-season costumes on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* were horrendous. They were spandex one-pieces and strapped under the boots, so they pulled your shoulders down all day long for 16 hours. It was so uncomfortable! But they got better after that, and became two-piece.

## FAN ENCOUNTER

There have been so many, but if I have to narrow it down to one, I'll go with Dr Oliver Sacks. He was, of course, renowned for his work in the field of autism. He told me that he had a patient who could only relate to the character of Data. In fact, he said I was the poster boy for autism. I was and still am honoured.



I'd have to say a series of letters over several years from a fan threatening to kill me. Apparently, he wasn't a fan of my acting and felt it would be better for all if he did away with me. Fortunately, after seeing my work in *Dude, Where's My Car?* he decided to let me live. I think he pitied me too much to kill me.

## AUDITION

The best audition I ever had was for *Out To Sea*, because I re-wrote the audition scene. The producers and director were in the room and we did my scene. I found out later as I walked out that the producer said, "What was that? Who does he think he is?" And the director, Martha Coolidge said, "Let's hire him..." It kind of worked to my advantage.

One time I auditioned for *Taming Of The Shrew* [which was playing] at the New York Shakespeare Festival. Meryl Streep and Raúl Juliá were the leads. The director told me it was wonderful. I went back to California and got a call saying I'd got the part, but had to do a courtesy audition for the director of the festival. I went straight from the airport to the audition, and the [festival] director said, "I don't think he's right for this..."

## LOCATION

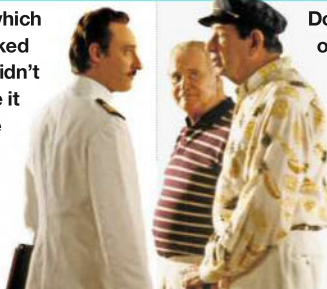
I've always envied people who have gone to Paris, Rome and the Riviera to shoot. I've made two movies in Yazoo City, Mississippi! But I'd say the soundstages at Paramount. It was always a thrill to walk past the dressing-room building Bing Crosby and Bob Hope used.



Right now, we're shooting *Outcast* in South Carolina. And there are times when it's three in the morning in the middle of the woods and it's freezing. But I'm still kind of grateful to be there. Every place has its charm and, bottom line, I'm working!

## MOMENT

I did *Out To Sea* with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, which was already a high-water mark for me. Jack Lemmon asked the director if he could try out a bit he had in mind. And it didn't work. I said, "If you don't mind, I think I know how to make it work." For me to be able to tell Jack Lemmon how to make a comedy bit work was like dying and going to heaven.



Doing *The Seagull* at the Public Theater in New York. I came out at the end and saw Lauren Bacall and Arthur Laurents, the playwright behind *West Side Story*. They booed me!

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD





# MOVIE MEMOIRS

The odd couple:  
Louis Winthorpe III  
(Dan Aykroyd) and  
Billy Ray Valentine  
(Eddie Murphy).

Sali Hughes on the films that shaped her life

## #6: THE CHRISTMAS FILM



ILLUSTRATION DAVID MAHONEY

EACH YEAR, SOMEWHERE around late November, social media dutifully announces the upcoming TV broadcast of Will Ferrell's *Elf*. Invariably, the hashtag begins to trend, people tweet their favourite quotes and the whole thing effectively cuts the ribbon on Christmas, declaring the British festivities open. I like *Elf*, my kids like *Elf*; we join the communal watching with as much enthusiasm as the next Christmas obsessive. But for me, the season hasn't begun in earnest until I've watched *Trading Places* with a roll of gift-wrap, a Sellotape strip dispenser and three fingers of Bailey's.

A great Christmas film, for me, is the same as a great Christmas record, in that the key is familiarity. We already know and love it, it's part of the fabric of the season. The mere fact of its dependable annual appearance is maybe more endearing than its actual content. The Christmas film (and record) club is not open to applications from new members. A perfect festive movie is one with a script I know so fluently that I can engage in communal watching with everyone on Twitter. At which point I'm usually unfollowed by two dozen tweeters, all rightly fed up of reading my friends Hogan, Niv and me quoting every *Trading Places* joke a full minute before it lands.

John Landis' 1983 rags-to-riches, riches-to-rags comedy about a life swap between Dan Aykroyd's smug, prissy stockbroker and Eddie Murphy's homeless petty crook is, in my view, the greatest Christmas movie of them all — despite the fact that the festive season is a somewhat arbitrary setting. Similarly to *Die Hard* and *The Apartment*, the story exploits, in this case, Christmas and New Year's Eve parties (and the announcement of annual orange crop reports) as plot devices, but overall, it's decidedly low on Christmas spirit. *Trading Places* isn't some Hallmark Cards schmaltz about Santa losing his presents, or some adorable child having to save Christmas. It's the story of two elderly shit-heels gleefully ruining lives for a one-dollar bet. It's a counterpoint to

the iconic *It's A Wonderful Life*, whose unfailingly decent George Bailey is shown the world without him and realises his immense value to fellow humans. In *Trading Places* we see a cold, selfish, racist toff who, when forced to experience fleeting financial hardship, tries to strangle one man and gleefully causes a heart attack in another.

The fact that, despite all this, *Trading Places* remains as festive as a wonky paper crown is a testament to its sheer brilliance. Its Christmas message is well hidden, but is carried through its core like a candy cane. Its timeless theme of haves and have-nots adopts both metaphorically and literally the Dickensian trope of nose pressed against the window, while never bending its humour to fit the genre. There are few things as unremittingly bleak as the sight of a wasted Santa in piss-covered platforms, attempting to disentangle a stolen salmon from a filthy nylon beard. And yet it's this pitiful, pathetic sequence that makes Aykroyd's revenge all the sweeter. Truly, *Trading Places* has one of cinema's all-time most satisfying endings, but to get there Aykroyd's Louis Winthorpe III must struggle back from his suicidal Santa lowpoint, via Christmas morning with a street hooker, disloyal butler and small-time criminal nursing him through a barbiturates comedown. And therein is another of *Trading Places*' great strengths. Relatability.



## RIPPER STREET

Killer moments from the Victorian romp's final series



### 1\_A VICTORIAN HEAT

The engine driving this final season is the cat and mousery between hero DI Edmund Reid (Matthew Macfadyen) and Augustus Dove (Killian Scott), an ice-cold calculating copper covering up for his serial killer brother Nat (Jonas Armstrong).



### 2\_HOME DISCOMFORT

Season 5 certainly doesn't skimp on the show's trademark Victorian viscera. But it also displays a psychological complexity, especially towards cannibalistic serial killer Nat. In the third episode he befriends a fishmonger's family and tries to live a normal life.



### 3\_THE BAD LIEUTENANT

Season 5 sees the reintroduction of bastard-hard DI Jedediah Shine (the excellent Joseph Mawle), last seen being beaten up by DS Drake (Jerome Flynn) in Season 2. The new head of H Division, Shine's confrontation with Reid is brilliant and brutal.

RIPPER STREET SEASON 5 IS AVAILABLE TO  
DOWNLOAD ON AMAZON PRIME

Raising the bar:  
Agent Carter (Hayley  
Atwell). Below: Carter  
with Howard Stark  
(Dominic Cooper)  
and Jason Wilkes  
(Reggie Austin).



## GET CARTER

Why we are going to miss  
Hayley Atwell's homespun  
hero, Agent Carter

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT



FAREWELL, MARGARET 'PEGGY' Carter. You will be much missed. If that sounds like the beginning of an obituary, that's with good reason. For this was the year that Hayley Atwell's indefatigable, boundary-breaking spy-cum-S.H.I.E.L.D.-co-founder, who rose from humble origins to become one of the most vivid and beloved characters in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, died. Not once, but twice, just for good measure.

The first time was in April, when she was bumped off off-screen in *Captain America: Civil War*. No surprises there — after all, that version of the character was now in her nineties.

The second time, somehow more conclusively, came soon after, with the news that *Agent Carter*, the slick and stylish TV show that saw Atwell reprise and expand upon the role she originated back in 2011's *Captain America: The First Avenger*, had been cancelled after just two short seasons. Two seasons in which Atwell had tons of fun as Peggy, fighting the Cold War in New York and LA, battling against sexist goons in the workplace of the 1940s and 1950s, and proving that there was far more to the calm, no-nonsense British agent than being Captain America's former squeeze.

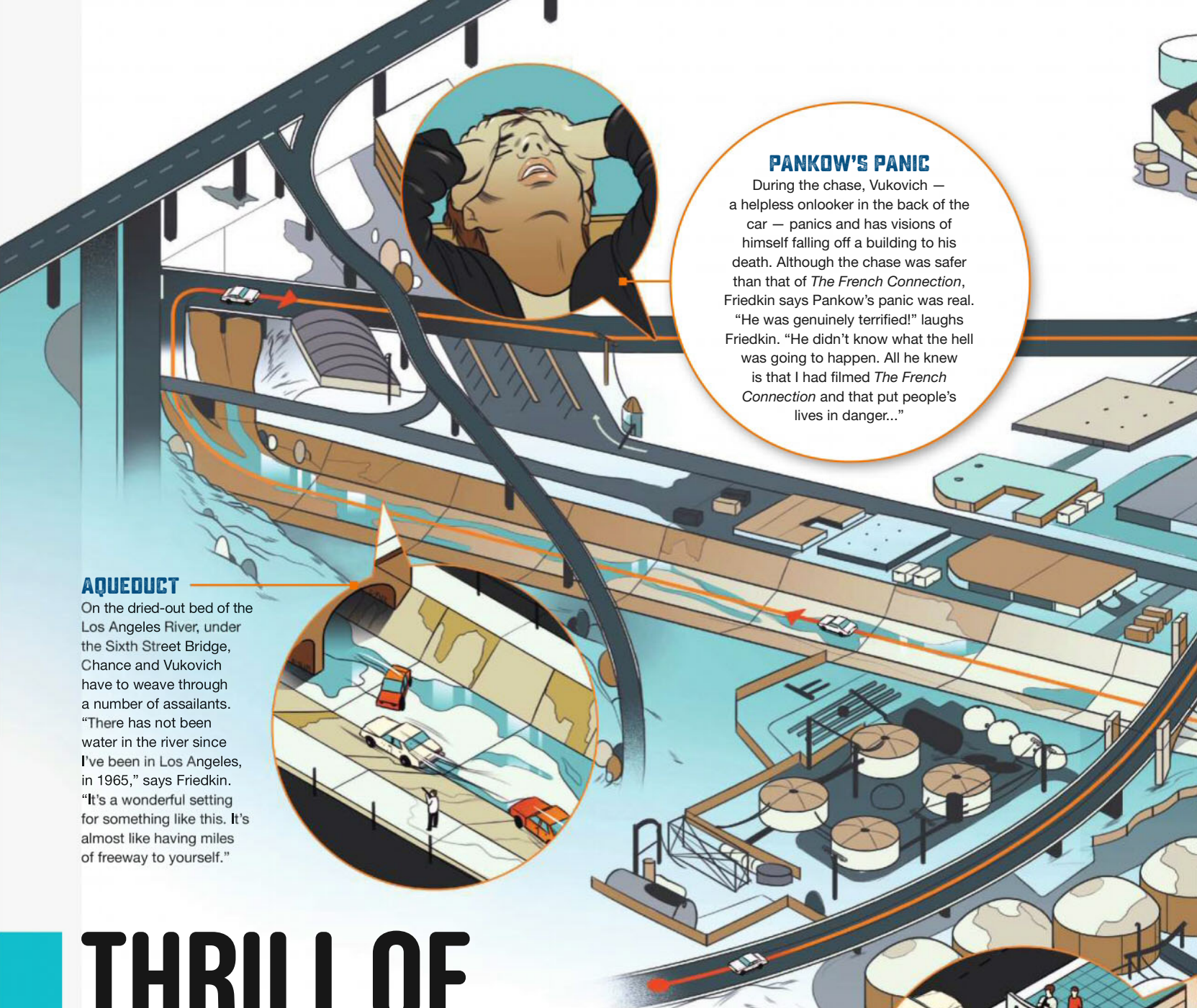
That's how she started out, of course. On paper, at least, as the British army liaison

who watched first-hand as Chris Evans' Steve Rogers went from wimp to warrior. The character was intended to be a one-and-done, but Atwell invested Peggy with so much heart and humanity (her brief can't-resist touch of the just-transformed Steve Rogers' heaving muscles was, apparently, improvised and feels entirely genuine) and created such affection for the character that Marvel started coming up with things for her to do. A Marvel One-Shot here. Cameos in the likes of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and *Ant-Man* there. And then her own series. Perhaps we should be thankful that we have 18 episodes of *Agent Carter*, perhaps the boldest stylistic departure the company has yet undertaken, at all, because that was never part of the plan. Peggy was never part of the plan. But she went right ahead and made her own.

Atwell is still hopeful of a solo movie at some point, and there's always a chance that we may see Peggy crop up in a future Marvel movie (and Atwell will voice a version of the character in the non-canon animated series *Avengers Assemble*), but unusually for Marvel, a company that has always treated death as a mild inconvenience, this feels final. And that's a damn shame.

AGENT CARTER: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION IS OUT  
ON 5 DECEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY





### PANKOW'S PANIC

During the chase, Vukovich — a helpless onlooker in the back of the car — panics and has visions of himself falling off a building to his death. Although the chase was safer than that of *The French Connection*, Friedkin says Pankow's panic was real. "He was genuinely terrified!" laughs Friedkin. "He didn't know what the hell was going to happen. All he knew is that I had filmed *The French Connection* and that put people's lives in danger..."

### AQUEDUCT

On the dried-out bed of the Los Angeles River, under the Sixth Street Bridge, Chance and Vukovich have to weave through a number of assailants. "There has not been water in the river since I've been in Los Angeles, in 1965," says Friedkin. "It's a wonderful setting for something like this. It's almost like having miles of freeway to yourself."

# THRILL OF THE CHASE

William Friedkin on the *other* great car chase of his career, in *To Live And Die In LA*

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT ILLUSTRATION ANDREW ARCHER

**MOST FILM DIRECTORS** never manage one great car chase, let alone two. Most film directors aren't William Friedkin. The 81-year-old was responsible for the famous dash through New York in 1971's *The French Connection*, and 14 years later was at it again with *To Live And Die In LA*, a gonzo thriller with an astonishing eight-minute pursuit at its centre. "I rate it as a much better chase, visually and emotionally, than the *French Connection* chase," says Friedkin. High praise. Even if he does say so himself.

*TO LIVE AND DIE IN LA* IS OUT NOW ON DVD AND BLU-RAY

### START YOUR ENGINES

The chase begins in the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles. In order to fuel their pursuit of counterfeiter Eric Masters (Willem Dafoe), Secret Service agents Richard Chance (William Petersen) and John Vukovich (John Pankow) have cornered a guy they think is carrying drug money. Suddenly, the mark is shot by a sniper, and the duo pile into their car and leg it from unidentified pursuers. "The chase is a metaphor for obsession," says Friedkin. "And I added a dose of paranoia. Sometimes in freeway traffic, you think you're in a kind of a death trap. That's what I was trying to capture, that feeling that you could be slammed out of anywhere."



## FREE LOVE FREEWAY

"I didn't know what I was going to do precisely at the time that I wrote the script," says Friedkin of the chase's freeway climax. "On impulse it occurred to me that the only thing I could do that was left was to send them the wrong way on the freeway." And so he did, obtaining permission from the city to shoot on the Long Beach freeway over the course of four weekends.

## THE WRONG WAY

As Chance weaves his way through the oncoming traffic to freedom, look carefully. The vehicles on the right-hand side are coming towards him, a reverse of the norm. "That was a purposeful, disorienting procedure," explains Friedkin. "I wanted the audience to be disrupted." And look at certain shots of Chance driving for extra oddness. "For a lot of it you saw Billy Petersen driving past cars that were just parked on the freeway," reveals Friedkin. "But you can't tell. Our car was moving at top speed and blowing by the camera on a slightly longer lens. They had to act the danger, but it wasn't there."

## RAILROAD

Speaking of which, a shot in which Chance plays chicken with an oncoming train on the Santa Fe railroad was about as dangerous as they come. "People at the Santa Fe railroad didn't want to do it, but I found a guy who was the motorman and he said, 'Okay, it's your life, guys,'" laughs Friedkin. "'If I hit you, see you later!' That was totally life-threatening."

START

## WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

The chase continues through Downtown LA, through a series of tight turns. "It starts on the east side of Los Angeles," explains Friedkin. "There's a lot of freight cars and bridges." The director wanted the chase to be as geographically accurate as possible. "I didn't do it step by step, block by block. But the chase is totally accurate to that stretch of freeway. I jumped several blocks, of course!"

THE  
EMPIRE  
VERDICT

TO LIVE AND  
DIE IN LA

★★★

CERT 18

### What we said:

"Friedkin, in his best film credit since the 1970s, turns in a fascinating, rock-scored visual essay on the mechanics of forging currency."

### Notable extras:

Friedkin commentary, archive featurette, alternative ending.



The background of the entire poster is a collage of images from the game. At the top, a large, close-up face of the protagonist, Vincent, looks intensely at the viewer. To his left, a smaller image shows a man in a red jacket holding a gun. Below that, a woman's face is visible. To the right of Vincent's face, three men in suits are walking down a street, one holding a long rifle. At the bottom, a man in a suit is seen from behind, reaching out towards a classic black and white car with its headlights on in a city street at night.

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# BINGEWATCH

Each month, our marathon man straps on to a sofa for a no-holds-barred binge

## THIS MONTH: ICE AGE

WORDS SIMON CROOK  
ILLUSTRATION PETER STRAIN

FIVE FILMS. THREE billion dollars. The *Ice Age* movies have made more money than the *Superman* franchise, *The Hunger Games*, and even the entire *Star Trek* series. Somehow, I've had my head in the permafrost for 15 years: I've never seen one. Guzzling all five in one enormous binge is like being hit in the brain by an asteroid-sized Skittle. After a fun start, the animation gets so manic my eyes start clacking like Newton balls.

Back we go, then, to a snowballed Earth in the Paleolithic era and Chris Wedge's 2002 original. Critter movies usually deliver a corny, kid-empowering be-yourself message. Not *Ice Age*. It's more a CG revival of vintage *Looney Tunes*. In fact, series mascot Scratt is basically Wile E. Coyote redrawn as a sabre-tooth squirrel with Road Runner as an acorn. The brutal, elastic slapstick of Scratt's Sisyphean nut-chasing is undoubtedly *Ice Age*'s ace (hence the excellent spin-off shorts), but he rarely interacts with the series' core trio: John Leguizamo's Sid, a sloth with a slurpy shpleech impediment; Manny, a mammoth mumbled by Ray Romano; and Denis Leary's snide smilodon, Diego. Outsiders forced into a dysfunctional herd, their first mission sees them deliver a cave-baby back to its parents. The laughs are knockabout and the energy cranky but there's heart, too: mid-way, the abandoned Manny's backstory is told via an

animated cave-painting: a touching moment that's subtle, understated and bruisingly bittersweet.

The first movie's bleak landscapes and angular, cubist characters make it visually unique, but all that changes in *Ice Age: The Meltdown* (2006). Any edge has been smoothed out with plushy-doll CG fur and an Andrex-soft script. As global warming liquefies their home, the trio head for colder climes, joined by Queen Latifah's 'mummoth', Ellie, and Crash (Seann William Scott) and Eddie (Josh Peck), possums with all the charm of two gurning YouTube pranksters. A few dark laughs cut through the candy (Sid nearly being sacrificed by Sid-devoted mini-Sids; a flock of vultures singing *Food Glorious Food*) but the smile's slowly melting off my face. When I catch my reflection in the telly I look like a snowman eating a hairdryer.

By *Dawn Of The Dinosaurs* (2009) it's clear *Ice Age* is trapped in a formula: there's an incredible journey, a geological event, and mild-peril set-pieces involving helter-skelter slopes and gulping sinkholes. Does that matter? Not really. These films are forever aimed at the next generation of five-year-olds, like a caveman Peter Pan. Rescuing Sid from a lost world of dinosaurs adds T-Rexes, *Avatar*-clone pterosaur action and Simon Pegg on top form as a mockney weasel. Still, it's so generic the credits serve up a Queen Latifah cover of *Walk*

*The Dinosaur*. Plus dire dancing animals. Help.

Four movies in, and 2012's *Continental Drift* proves surprisingly memorable, thanks to its villain: a Gigantopithecus buccaneer vividly voiced by Peter Dinklage. The threat here is a continental split, and the script is one part pirate swashbuckler (fun), one part family sitcom (Manny and Ellie now have a tween mammoth — not remotely fun). Running out of things to do with Sid, Manny and Diego, the gap's filled with a new zoo of characters: Nick Frost's elephant seal, J-Lo's sabre-tooth tiger, Rebel Wilson's kangaroo, pigs, badgers, whales, oh my... and more dancing animals.

This year's *Collision Course* disappointed at the box office and is, sadly, flogging a dead Scrat. Somehow, Manny and co divert a species-obliterating asteroid, but the story's just a white noise of sketches scrapping for attention. On the plus side, Pegg's weasel returns. Then Jessie J rocks up as a sexy sloth, and we all know what that means: dancing animals, pixel-twerking on my shrieking soul. How do you save a franchise heading for extinction? I see two options. 1) Wedge returning for a back-to-its-Looney-roots reboot or 2) *Ice Rage: Dawn Of Rabies*. I know which I'd prefer...

**ICE AGE: COLLISION COURSE IS OUT ON 5 DECEMBER ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**







# STORY OF THE SHOT

## LA DOLCE VITA

WORDS IAN FREER

AT ONE POINT in Federico Fellini's 1987 curio, *Intervista*, the great Italian director and his muse, Marcello Mastroianni, visit Anita Ekberg's villa and project a very significant scene on her living room wall. It is, of course, the moment from *La Dolce Vita* — 'The Sweet Life' — where Ekberg's alluring starlet Sylvia climbs into Rome's famous Trevi Fountain, the climax of a night spent leading Mastroianni's journo Marcello Rubini through the streets of night-time Rome, and possibly astray. Watching the scene, almost 30 years after she shot it, Ekberg's eyes well up with tears. A bittersweet reaction to a bittersweet, beautiful scene.

It was shot over nine dawn in the winter of 1959 — Ekberg remembered January, Fellini cited March. Arriving at the location, Fellini discovered the water was filthy, to his distress. Bizarrely, the answer came from an employee of Swedish airline SAS, who just happened to be on set and suggested using his sea-green dye marker (used to help attract attention in case of an emergency at sea) to colour the water. Dubbed a "lioness" by Fellini, Ekberg willingly went into the icy water. "I was freezing," she once said. "They had to lift me out of the water because I couldn't feel my legs anymore."

Mastroianni proved more difficult. "He had to get undressed, put on a frogman's suit and get dressed again to combat the cold," remembered Fellini. "He polished off a bottle of vodka, and when he shot the scene he was completely pissed." For his part, Mastroianni was intimidated by Ekberg. He described her skin as "so white that when I touched her cheek, my nicotine-stained fingers looked so dark they had to put make-up on them. Fellini looked at my brown fingers and told me I should learn the right way to wipe my behind."

Owners of the houses around the fountain rented out their balconies and windows to curious onlookers who clapped and cheered after every take, a Fellini-esque show within a show. "Every time I look at a picture of Ekberg in the Trevi Fountain, I have the sensation of living those magic moments, those sleepless nights surrounded by the miaowing of the cats and the crowd gathered from every corner of the city," Fellini said later.

*La Dolce Vita* inspired more than just names for poor Italian restaurants and Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty*, and the film has further enhanced the status of the already legendary Trevi (also the inspiration for *Three Coins In The Fountain*). You can't, of course, just wade into the Trevi — it's off-limits, but that hasn't stopped many from trying. Most recently, on 19 July 2016, author and former model Delilah Jay waded into it in evening dress and fur, twirling and blowing kisses to the gathering tourists. She was later fined 450 euros. The sweet life, indeed.

LA DOLCE VITA IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY  
AND DOWNLOAD



# THE RISE AND RISE OF HARLEY QUINN

The creator of *Suicide Squad*'s standout on the cultural evolution of "Daddy's little monster"

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

PAUL DINI, THE man behind Harley Quinn, can pinpoint the moment when he knew his creation had truly made it. It was this October, in fact. The Saturday before Halloween, a time for most Los Angelenos to have a massive hooley. And then Dini peered out of his window. "I saw a roving gang of Harley Quinns going down the street," he laughs. "There was a schoolgirl Harley, in a red-and-black outfit with the mask, a steampunk Harley, and the regular movie Harley. They were everywhere. I looked at my wife and said, 'Well, there's Daddy's little monster.'"

Yes, 24 years after Dini, then a writer on *Batman: The Animated Series*, first introduced Harley Quinn, it's fair to say she's having a moment. A zeitgeist-piercing surge that can be traced back to that "regular movie", *Suicide Squad*. David Ayer's wildly successful caper (\$745 million worldwide and counting) brought together a bunch of the DC Universe's baddest bad guys, including Will Smith's Deadshot, Jai Courtney's Captain Boomerang and Jay

Hernandez's El Diablo, and watched them cede the spotlight to Margot Robbie's colourful, capricious take on the Joker's mad, bad and dangerous-to-know girlfriend.

She gets almost all of the best lines. She gets the meatiest story, as she begins to establish an identity away from her psychotic paramour. And the lion's share of the film's key moments. And in the new Extended Edition version of the film, the bulk of the additional 13 minutes restored to Ayer's film involve Harley.

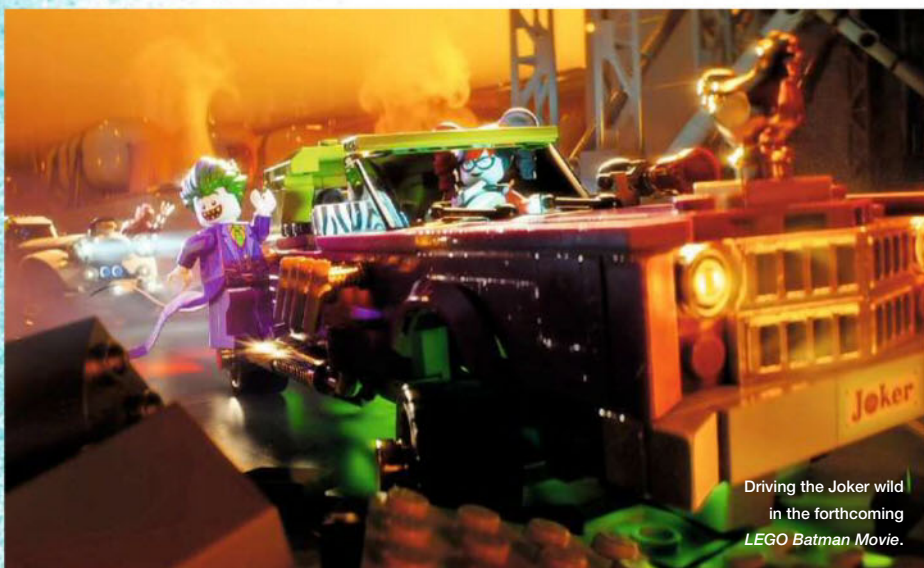
There's a deeper dive into the twisted mechanics behind her relationship with Jared Leto's Joker: a lengthy scene in which a distraught and pre-transformation-in-vat-of-acid Harley chases down the Clown Prince Of Crime and, pausing only to kill a passing trucker, demands at gunpoint that the Joker fall in love with her. "A heart scares you and a gun doesn't?" she asks. And then there's a sequence in which she deliberately







Harley Quinn debuts a new look in the *Arkham Asylum* video game.



Driving the Joker wild in the forthcoming *LEGO Batman Movie*.

antagonises various members of the Squad, trying to provoke them into a response. “She’s a rabbit hole,” counsels Captain Boomerang. “Don’t fall in.”

It’s no surprise that the Extended Edition ups the ante on Harley. For, even in a movie starring Will Smith and Jared Leto, even in a film that has Batman swoop in every now and again to bust some heads, she is the undoubted stand-out. The reason why you’re not reading a piece about Killer Croc right now. But where did it all begin?

“IT IS TO laugh, huh, Mr J?” With that one line, delivered while perched on a desk as the Joker throws darts backwards at a picture of Commissioner Gordon, Harley Quinn announced herself to the world in *Joker’s Favor*, a 1992 episode of *The Animated Series*. It’s fascinating to note just how complete the character already was. The costume may have changed — no red-and-blue pigtails or hot pants for this Harley, who’s clad in a red-and-black jester’s costume — and certain intricacies of her relationship with the Joker had yet to be filled in, but otherwise it’s all there: the “Mr J” catchphrase (that’s studded throughout *Suicide Squad*), the insouciant attitude, the welcome dollop of female energy that enlivened the Joker,

a character whose henchmen had traditionally been manly hunks of meat. They might as well have called him the Bloker.

Dini wanted to shake that up a little. “I thought a girl would be good in the mix. I came up with an idea for a snappy blonde girl who would hang out with the Joker,” he explains of Harley Quinn’s origin. “And she really did have a purpose for him. He can’t go into a lot of places without being recognised, so it helps to have a couple of allies to do the dirty work for him.”

Although Harley’s personality sprang almost fully formed from Dini’s fingers, Bruce Timm — the animation director on *Batman: The Animated Series* — is credited as her co-creator. “I don’t think Bruce really knew about the character until I’d handed him the outline,” laughs Dini. Timm was entirely responsible for the look and movement of the character. “He came up with a design for Harley in her jester costume, and what she looked like when she was in disguise,” adds Dini. “She almost looked like a dancer in the way she was posed. That was the idea, that she was very athletic and capable if she got into a fight.”

There have been murmurings over the years that Harley Quinn was initially intended as a one-and-done character. Not the case. “I liked the fact she added some humour to Batman’s world, >



and expanded it a little bit. I liked writing stories about her and putting her in episodes where she fit. I liked the character from the get-go and hoped she would catch on.”

That she did. Although she pops up in relatively few episodes of *Batman: The Animated Series*, Harley turned heads right away. Just a year later, DC Comics started including the character in some of their own titles. And then, in 1994, they approached Dini and Timm with an offer that would change the course of the character forever, and lead to Robbie waltzing away with a film just over two decades later.

**THAT OFFER WAS** to produce a comic, *Mad Love*, in the style of *The Animated Series*, that would tackle Harley's origin. It was something Dini hadn't given a great deal of thought to but, “She couldn't just be a girl that went wrong that he keeps calling up every time he escapes.”

From that sprang the idea — used in *Suicide Squad* — that Harley Quinn was once Dr Harleen Quinzel, a psychiatrist assigned to the Joker during one of his stints at Arkham Asylum. During that time, Dr Quinzel was seduced — emotionally and mentally at the very least — by the Joker, and fell in love with him. Or was convinced she had fallen in love with him. “The idea we liked a lot was that he had somehow gotten into her head, snapped her and brought her over to his point of view,” says Dini.

From the off, pretty much, it was clear Harley was suffering at the hands of the Joker. He constantly demeans her, belittles her, slaps her. He even pushes her out of a window. And yet she kept coming back for more, kept excusing away his violence. Some critics have argued Harley's unblinking devotion to the Joker reduces her to mere chattel, another so-called strong woman who becomes nothing more than a plaything at the hands of an abusive man. But Dini, who was inspired by what he saw happening in some friends' relationships at the time, says he wanted to shine a light on the plight of women trapped in cycles of violence. In, don't forget, a show ostensibly aimed at younger viewers. “She was an interesting character in that she did have this tragic flaw, this weird co-dependency with the Joker,” says Dini. “We were saying, ‘Hey, kids, don't be this. Watch out, this is the consequence of hanging out with a maniac like the Joker.’ If anything, it's a cautionary story.”

In the comic books, Harley Quinn has long since found the inner strength to move away from the Joker. She's more antihero now than villain, a part of the *Suicide Squad* on the printed page and someone who enjoys a polygamous relationship with Poison Ivy. (The seeds for which were sown in *The Animated Series*, principally the episode *Harley & Ivy*). Dini continues to write for the character across media as varied as *Arkham Asylum*, the video game, and one-off stories for DC Comics. But he has ceded the character's development on the printed page to the likes of Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti on the *Suicide Squad* ongoing series,



From top to bottom: Co-creator Paul Dini; Margot Robbie as Dr Quinzel with Jared Leto's Joker; *Batman: The Animated Series'* red-and-black creation; Cosplay Joker and Harley.

believing he laid the foundation for that change. “We gave her a place to grow from,” he says. “The other writers who have taken over Harley have acknowledged where she's come from and are keeping her evolution going.”

In *Suicide Squad*, with which Dini was not involved, that evolution seemed to halt somewhat, with the back-to-square-one iteration of Harley Quinn attracting criticism from some quarters. Throughout, she's defined by her relationship with the Joker, and even though Ayer thrives with notions of her breaking the cycle of co-dependency, it ends with her being rescued from prison by Mr J, her knight in purple shining armour. “People say she should have walked out on the Joker,” muses Dini. “The Joker was barely in the movie. So even if he comes off as a psychotic, murderous but ardent boyfriend, why not show the two of them in love as they run off together? That way, the relationship has a place to go — then the whole thing can sour and she can move away from him.”

Perhaps wings will be spread the next time we see Robbie as the character, whether that's in *Suicide Squad 2* or the solo movie on which she is a producer. For one thing has been universal — even if some have been unhappy with certain aspects of Harley Quinn's character or costume in *Suicide Squad*, Robbie's performance has been acclaimed across the board. Like Robert Downey Jr. and Tony Stark, or Hugh Jackman and Wolverine, it seems one of those perfect marriages of actor and comic-book character. The playfulness. The willingness to embrace the darkness lurking under the surface. The vivacity. And, of course, the ability to take a character that had been previously merely popular (just ask Kevin Smith, who named his daughter Harley Quinn), and turn her into a phenomenon. The kind of phenomenon that inspires people to dress up as Daddy's little monster. “There's always going to be supercilious finger-waggers and people who are ready to shame anybody else for anything,” says Dini. “But Harley is like a walking, smiling middle finger to all those people. Harley's gonna do what she wants, she's gonna look the way she wants. That's what people embrace.”

Needless to say, she had the last laugh.

**SUICIDE SQUAD: THE EXTENDED EDITION IS OUT ON 28 NOVEMBER ON DOWNLOAD AND ON 5 DECEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**

THE  
EMPIRE  
VERDICT

SUICIDE  
SQUAD  
★★★★  
CERT 15

**What we said:** “Like *Avengers Assemble* forced through a *Deadpool* mangle, *Suicide Squad* gives new life to DC's big-screen universe. So bad-to-the-bone it's good.” **Notable extras:** Various featurettes, including one on Harley Quinn and the Joker's relationship.





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# THE FIRST-TAKE CLUB

Filling in those filmic blind spots, one person at a time

## #6 IAIN MORRIS ON TITANIC

WHEN WE LAUNCHED *The First-Take Club*, which asks people to choose a film they haven't seen from our 301 Greatest Movies Of All Time list (published in 2014), watch it, then write about it, we expected to uncover gaping holes in cinematic CVs. But we didn't expect to find someone who hadn't seen the second-biggest film of all time. A film that remains one of only three to have crossed the \$2 billion barrier, made James Cameron king of the world, and won 11 Oscars. It is, of course, *Titanic*. And the person who somehow hasn't seen it? That would be Iain Morris, the co-creator and co-writer (along with Damon Beesley) of *The Inbetweeners*. So, Iain, how on earth did this hugely successful film manage to pass you by?

I never really felt the need to see *Titanic*. It's a film about a boat, and everyone knows how it ends. Also, despite that haul of Oscars, it doesn't seem especially well thought of all these years later. Nobody has ever told me I absolutely must watch it, in the way they do when they hear I haven't seen *Die Hard* or *Lord Of The Rings*.

One thing I didn't know when I agreed to write this was that *Titanic's* well over three hours long. That's incredible. I'm not opposed to long films — I love *Lawrence Of Arabia* and *The Godfather Part II* — but those were designed with an interval. You're not meant to watch them without stretching your legs.

The other thing that, frankly, makes the film drag a bit and the iceberg arrive like a redeeming





angel, is that James Cameron's script isn't great. It doesn't really deal in subtlety or subtext. At all. The characters declaim what they are thinking about each other and events at all times. And in case that's too nuanced for you, the 101-year-old Rose narrates. Even when lines aren't about what has happened or is about to happen, the script can be clunky. For example, when showing Rose his 'work', Jack says of one of the models — not as a joke — "She was a one-legged prostitute. She had a good sense of humour, though." Presumably unlike all the dour unipedal hookers he's met?

Rose's dialogue isn't much better, and includes the breathtakingly tasteless line that the Titanic was "a slave ship taking me back in chains". Now, I've only read the one book on the transatlantic

slave trade — Hugh Thomas' excellent *The Slave Trade: The Story Of The Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* — but I'm pretty sure the slave ships didn't have ballrooms or white tie dinners.

Two things about Leonardo DiCaprio's Jack: one — he's entitled. The few times I've flown business class I get annoyed if someone comes through the closed curtain to use the toilet. Jack, a third-class passenger who didn't even buy his ticket, swans about the upper decks like he owns the place. Two — and this is crucial — he's not an 'artist'. His sketch of Rose, so central to the plot, looks like it was done by the bloke who drew *George & Lynne* in *The Sun*.

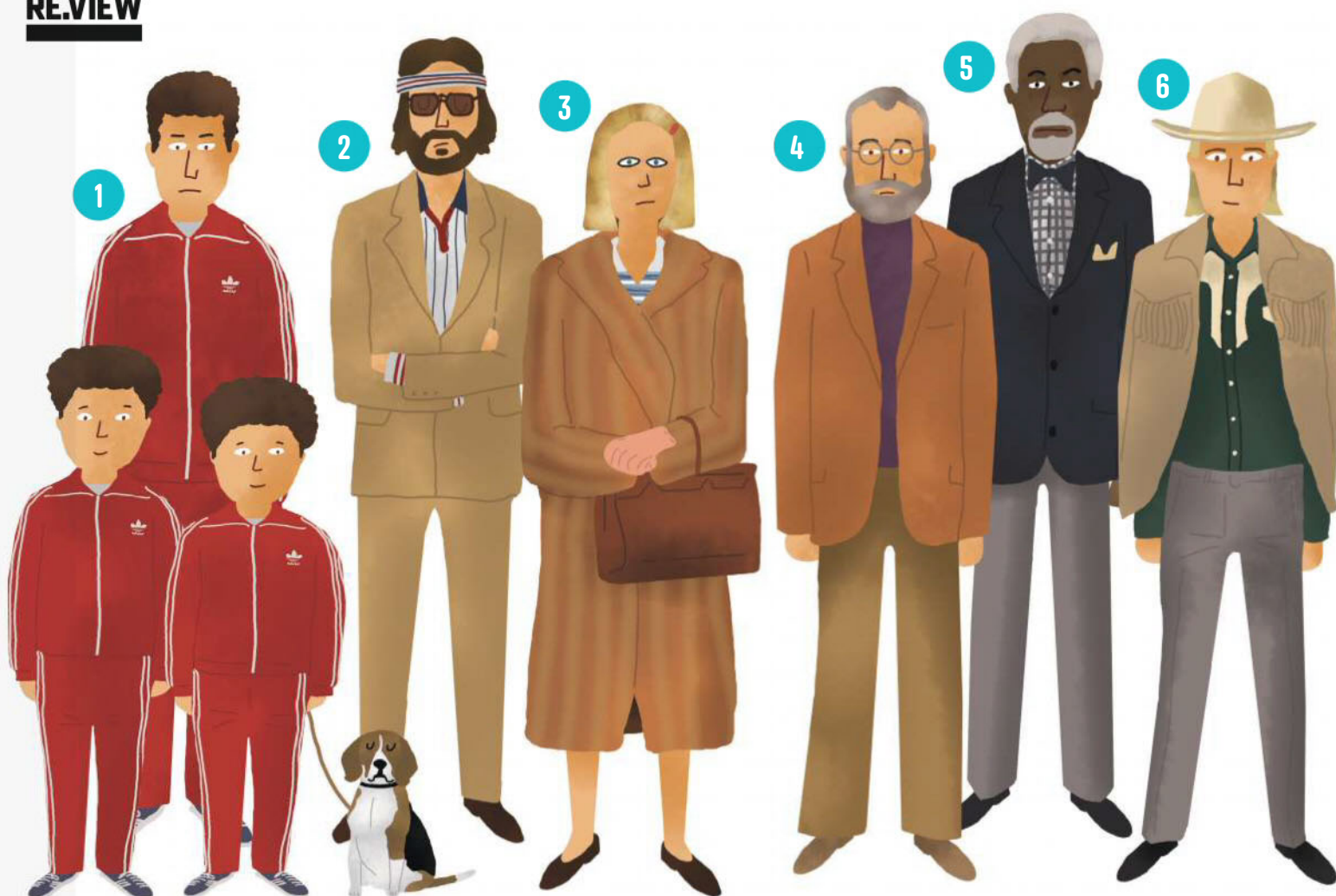
To be fair, I didn't watch this film as James Cameron clearly intended it to be seen — on a big

screen. Even on the small screen it is technically a marvel though. The sweeping wide shots of the crew walking on deck may look a little *Grand Theft Auto IV* these days, but you definitely get a sense you are on a big boat on the sea, I'll say that for it.

Over the film's 40-hour running time no cliché is left unturned until finally we arrive at the now famous ending where Rose is clinging to a door and Jack slips away, sacrificing himself to save her. Was there enough room for both of them on that door? Answer — yes, obviously, but I get the impression Rose was sick of Jack and his 'say what you see' attitude to life by then. Just like me.

**TITANIC IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**





# THE ROYAL COLLECTION

## A PEEK INSIDE THE CLOTHES OF *THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS*

WORDS **CHRISTOPHER LAVERTY**  
ILLUSTRATIONS **MAX DALTON**

IT HAS BEEN 15 years since director Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* arrived in cinemas, providing a fascinating lesson in the language of costume design. Each character in this dysfunctional mash-up of family, friends and hangers-on can be read via their seemingly absurd clothing choices. As costume designer for the film Karen Patch tells us, there's far more to these fancy threads than just kook...

**1\_ CHAS** When it comes to Ben Stiller's maths genius, it's all about that red three-stripe Adidas tracksuit, which didn't even exist at the time. "I had them made in-house," notes Patch. "I was able to obtain fabric from Adidas as well as permission to redesign and use their logos." Chas' devotion to the 'red alert' tracksuit is almost unwavering — when he attends Royal's funeral, he wears the same tracksuit in black.

**2\_ RICHIE** Richie's (Luke Wilson) attire remains near-constant throughout — a single-breasted beige wool suit over 1970s-era Fila tennis uniform, complete with headband, sunglasses and Fila sweatbands. Like most of the Tenenbaums, he is frozen in time at a point of failure. "All Richie's costumes were duplicated for the young Richie," says Patch. "Both his tennis clothing and his camel 'travelling suit'."

**3\_ MARGOT** The rise of the bourgeoisie 1990s hipster can all be traced back to, or blamed on, Gwyneth Paltrow's Margot. Striped tennis dress (by Lacoste), fur coat (by Fendi) and brown penny loafers — it's all there in a look Patch classifies as vintage student chic via upscale Manhattan boutiques. It's a look Margot has kept since childhood — note the identical fur coat, in kiddy size, hanging on the wall as she practises ballet.

**4\_ RALEIGH ST. CLAIR** Even though he is based on renowned professor and neurologist Oliver Sacks, who in reality wore pumped-up sweaty bike leathers, Raleigh St. Clair (Bill

Murray) is actually dressed more like a 1960s beatnik. "Raleigh's costume was loosely based on a combination of intellectual non-conformists," explains Patch.

**5\_ HENRY SHERMAN** Blue is the colour for Henry Sherman (Danny Glover), whose blazer is searing bright blue, finished with a pouffy yellow pocket square and 'nerdish' bow tie. "Colour was very important for us," explains Patch. "Wes had his brother Eric draw sets and characters in colour."

**6\_ ELI CASH** It takes a brave man to consciously dress like infamously inept Civil War cavalry officer General Custer. Owen Wilson's Eli Cash is that man. His look is an outward homage to the General, with the traditional rancher shirt with rodeo flourishes, fringed buckskin jacket and high-crowned cowboy hat.

**7\_ ROYAL** "The wardrobe is highly stylised but based in reality," says Patch of her approach to styling the characters. "It explained a lot about the psychology of the Tenenbaums."

THE WES ANDERSON COLLECTION BY MATT ZOLLER SEITZ AND WES ANDERSON, PUBLISHED BY ABRAMS, IS OUT NOW





Immediately evident with tactless racist Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman), proud wearer of a Norfolk suit. In its distinctive rough tweed with full belt, it's the suit of an active man.

**8\_ ETHELINE** "Pink was a predominant colour for us," says Patch of Etheline's (Anjelica Huston) assigned colour. As the story progresses, she begins to take on blue hues — which is the colour of her new lover, Henry Sherman. Intriguingly, she has the same expensive Hermes bag as Margot, though Margot's is a Birkin, while Etheline carries a Kelly.

**THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS IS OUT ON 5 DECEMBER ON BLU-RAY AS PART OF THE CRITERION COLLECTION**

**THE  
EMPIRE  
VERDICT**

**THE ROYAL  
TENENBAUMS**

★★★★  
CERT 15

**What we said:** "Riddled with offbeat eccentricities, damaged, dysfunctional characters and the kind of weird, wonderful comedy that comes along all too rarely."

**Notable extras:** Wes Anderson commentary, interviews and behind-the-scenes footage.



## LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND BILLY ZANE

**He's a cool guy. He's trying to help you**

**Hi Billy,**

My sister constantly watches pirate movies and streams illegal downloads, and it's really getting on my nerves. I'm a huge film fan, and I know people who download movies illegally are hurting the film industry. Yet I can't make my sister see sense on this, and it's driving me nuts. What can I do? She's my sister, I can hardly report her to the police. But it's also making me so mad — I save up hard to be able to go to the cinema and buy DVDs and Blu-rays, and she's just watching great films without lifting a finger. What should I do?

Yours, **EN**

You say your sister watches pirate movies?! Does she wear a patch and have a parrot? Is her wooden leg scratching up the coffee table? Sorry, that's the funniest thing I've ever read! I know what you meant, but c'mon... You know what I hate more than bad grammar and the entitlement of media thieves? People who would consider calling the cops on friends or family for anything less than assault. What does she do for a living? One day, when you are walking together, give something she holds of value or creates, or normally sells, to someone on the street for free. See how she reacts. Explain that it's the same thing. Hopefully laugh about it after she retrieves it, and discuss it like adults. You cannot instil nobility with equally heinous behaviour. Live the example. Shoot high. If she balks because everyone else is doing it, share the principal of decency, differentiation, individuality, and a life graced by the actions of doing the right thing.

**Hi Billy,**

I've been seeing this girl for about six months and she's amazing, but she has a dog I'm pretty heavily allergic to. She's had the dog for years and thinks the world of it, but I'm reaching the end of my tether. Is it time to issue an

ultimatum — either the dog goes, or I do? Thanks, **NR**

If you think you are going to come between a girl and her dog you are sorely mistaken. Besides, you would be making the choice really easy for her by simply giving her an ultimatum to begin with. Sackable offence, mate. Who wants that nonsense? Asking her to sacrifice an unconditionally loving, loyal family friend, for someone foolish enough to ask her to do so, is a major red flag on any relationship. So don't go there, NR. Besides, it sounds like Fido is at the end of his tether too. You've waited this long. What's a bit more? Help him through his transition, and her, her sorrow. Be a hero. And before you suggest selling the beast or putting it down, consider some alternatives that don't fuel resentment or kick you to the curb. But honestly, one question. What's wrong with your place?

**Dear Billy,**

Quentin Tarantino once said he could never date any girl who didn't like *Rio Bravo*. Well, I feel that way about *The Shawshank Redemption*. I love that movie. But now I've met a girl who's just perfect for me in every way. Except for one. She hates *Shawshank*. She hadn't seen it when we got together, and when I persuaded her to finally give it a go, she asked me to turn it off halfway through (the bit where Andy meets the Sisters...). She's since refused to finish watching it, and nothing I can say to her will change her mind. What can I do? Do I really want to lose the woman of my dreams over a film?

Thanks, **TN**

**No, you don't. But try *Rio Bravo*.**

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO BILLY ZANE VIA [BILLY@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM](mailto:BILLY@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM). BILLY HAS DONATED HIS FEE FOR THIS COLUMN TO CHARITY



Liam Neeson's  
**Monster** offers valuable  
 life lessons to Conor  
 (Lewis MacDougall).

# A GIANT TALE

See *A Monster Calls*, starring  
 Liam Neeson and Sigourney  
 Weaver, first and for free!

A FANTASY SHOT through with reality, *A Monster Calls* is shaping up to be one of the essential films of 2017. Now, thanks to our friends at Entertainment One, we are offering you the chance to see it first and for nothing at special screenings on Tuesday 6 December. Based on the novel by Patrick Ness (who also penned the screenplay), *A Monster Calls* is a fresh take on the classic coming-of-age story. At its heart is the unlikely friendship between pre-teen Conor (Lewis MacDougall) and a huge, ancient yew tree-like creature (voiced by Liam Neeson) who stomps up to Conor's window and helps him make sense of the world. The monster promises to tell Conor three stories on successive nights — in return, Conor must regale the monster with a story on the fourth. *A Monster Calls* may have the simplicity of a fable but it is not squarely a kids' film — it's a tale for everyone, with the feel of Guillermo del Toro or Tim

Burton at their best, exploring the darkness on the edges of childhood. Director Juan Antonio Bayona, the man behind classic Spanish chiller *The Orphanage* and gut-wrenching tsunami drama *The Impossible*, has married his sense of the visually stunning — the sheer scale of the creature is astonishing, wrapping its branches scarily around Conor — to his trademark emotional directness. With this combination of the epic and the intimate, it is no surprise Bayona will next direct the behemoths of *Jurassic World 2*.

The director's vision is served by a world-class cast. Felicity Jones — next seen in *Rogue One* — plays the pivotal role of Conor's mother, Toby Kebbell is his estranged father, and Sigourney Weaver (complete with very English accent) is his chilly grandmother. While state-of-the-art effects create the 'monster', Neeson, the owner of perhaps the richest voice in modern cinema, brings him to life.

To attend the screening — it is first come, first served so don't delay — just go to [www.showfilmfirst.com](http://www.showfilmfirst.com) and enter this code: 434717.

**A MONSTER CALLS IS IN CINEMAS  
 FROM 1 JANUARY 2017**



## HOW TO CATCH A MONSTER CALLS

Screenings take place on Tuesday 6 December at 6 for 6.30pm. Your nearest cinema is listed below. To claim a pair of free tickets, log on to [www.showfilmfirst.com](http://www.showfilmfirst.com) and enter this code: 434717. Remember, it is first come, first served, so be quick!

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**VUE** — Aberdeen, Edinburgh Ocean, Islington, Leeds Light, Leicester, Reading



# MY MOVIE MASTERMIND

## ABEL FERRARA

**Bad Lieutenant. King Of New York. Driller Killer. Quiz Whizz?**

WORDS SIMON BRAUND



### LEADER BOARD

Ben Kingsley	9.5
Christopher Lee	9.5
David O. Russell	9.5
Quentin Tarantino	9.5
Robert Rodriguez	9
Guillermo del Toro	9
Werner Herzog	9
Christian Slater	8.5
Bryan Singer	8.5
John Waters	8

### 1 What is the name of the punk band that drives Reno to homicidal mania in *The Driller Killer*?

The Roosters. We just did a show in Paris and we did some of those songs. Tony Coca-Cola, the guitarist from The Roosters, is actually D.A. Metrov, the artist I based my character Reno on. Those were his girlfriends in the movie, it was his apartment, his paintings, the whole deal. It was like a documentary of his life, minus the drilling — I hope.

**Correct.**

### 2 In 1985, you directed two episodes of *Miami Vice*. One was called *The Home Invaders*; what was the title of the other?

I know this, but I gotta think. I never understood the title. We had David Johansen [lead singer of legendary glam-punk pioneers The New York Dolls] guest star. His piano player, Joe Delia, is my composer... [pause] *The Dutch Oven*!

**Correct.**

### 3 In *Ms 45*, Thana carries body parts out of her apartment in a shopping bag from which then-hip New York clothing store?

That I don't know. Tell me, what the fuck is it?

**The correct answer is Fiorucci.**

### 4 *Body Snatchers* is credited to three screenwriters. Can you name them?

It was Nicky St. John, that's a gimme. Then it was two of those kinda cult horror guys, right? I don't know their names; I had no connection

with them. [On hearing the answer] Right, right. Where are those knuckleheads now? We rejected their script and re-wrote it. They set it on a fuckin' army base. It's an oxymoron. I'd love to do that movie again, man. And if I do, I'm gonna set it in a small town. Northern California, because you got that Alfred Hitchcock *The Birds* feel.

**The correct answer is Stuart Gordon, Dennis Paoli and Nicholas St. John.**

### 5 According to Madonna's character Sarah in *Dangerous Game*, why did God create men?

Yeah, Madonna... I got a good performance out of her, and that's all that counts, right? Fuck, I don't know. "To help mow the lawn"? No, it's better than that. God created men because... "because dildos can't mow the lawn".

**Half a point. The correct answer is "because vibrators can't mow the lawn".**

### 6 Which Humphrey Bogart movie is Vincent Gallo's character Johnny watching in the opening scene of *The Funeral*?

Shit. It's the one where they take all those fuckin' guys hostage in the desert. Fuck. Forget it. I have advanced dementia, man, these things are hard. It's a cool name, right? A crazy name. I can't remember, my mind don't work like that.

**The correct answer is *The Petrified Forest*.**

### 7 How many films have you made with screenwriter Nicholas St. John?

Starting with *The Driller Killer*, right? No, wait.

*Nicky's Film*; *The Hold Up*; *9 Lives* [Of A Wet Pussy]; *Driller Killer*; *Ms. 45*; *Fear City*; *China Girl*; *King Of New York*; *The Funeral*; *The Addiction*, uh... *Dangerous Game*... and *Body Snatchers*. So 12, right?

**Correct.**

### 8 In *Bad Lieutenant*, on which two baseball teams does Harvey Keitel's character place the fateful losing bet?

New York Mets, LA Dodgers. I don't think they ever played that series.

**Correct.**

### 9 In *4:44 Last Day On Earth*, what type of food do Cisco and Skye order for their last meal?

It was Thai food in the script, but it was Chinese food in the movie. It was a very confusing issue.

**The correct answer is Vietnamese.**

### 10 In *King Of New York*, what does Frank White say just before he shoots Bishop on the subway?

I just saw it last night. "I don't need forever."

**Correct.**

### ABEL FERRARA SCORES 5.5

"Considering I'm a brain-dead motherfucker, I think I came close enough."

**THE DRILLER KILLER IS OUT ON 28 NOVEMBER ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND LIMITED EDITION STEELBOOK**



# THE GUIDE

Everything else coming your way this month

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## 4 DECEMBER

**NERVE** DOWNLOAD (DVD, BLU-RAY 5 DECEMBER)

## 5 DECEMBER

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**THE CYNIC, THE RAT AND THE FIST** DVD, BLU-RAY  
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### NEW COMMENTARY

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### NEW INTERVIEWS

**THE SQUID AND THE WHALE** BLU-RAY  
Noah Baumbach's breakout film gets a Criterion release with new interviews with the director and his key cast, including Jesse Eisenberg, Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney.

**STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES — THE RODDENBERRY VAULT** DVD, BLU-RAY  
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**THEO & HUGO** DVD, BLU-RAY  
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## 12 DECEMBER

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### BONUS SHORT FILM

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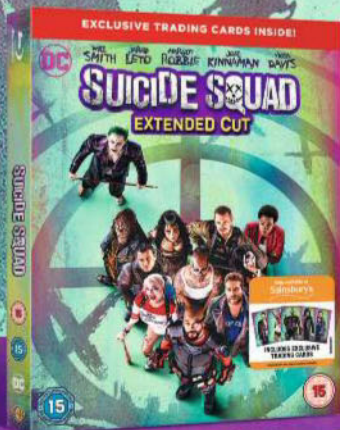




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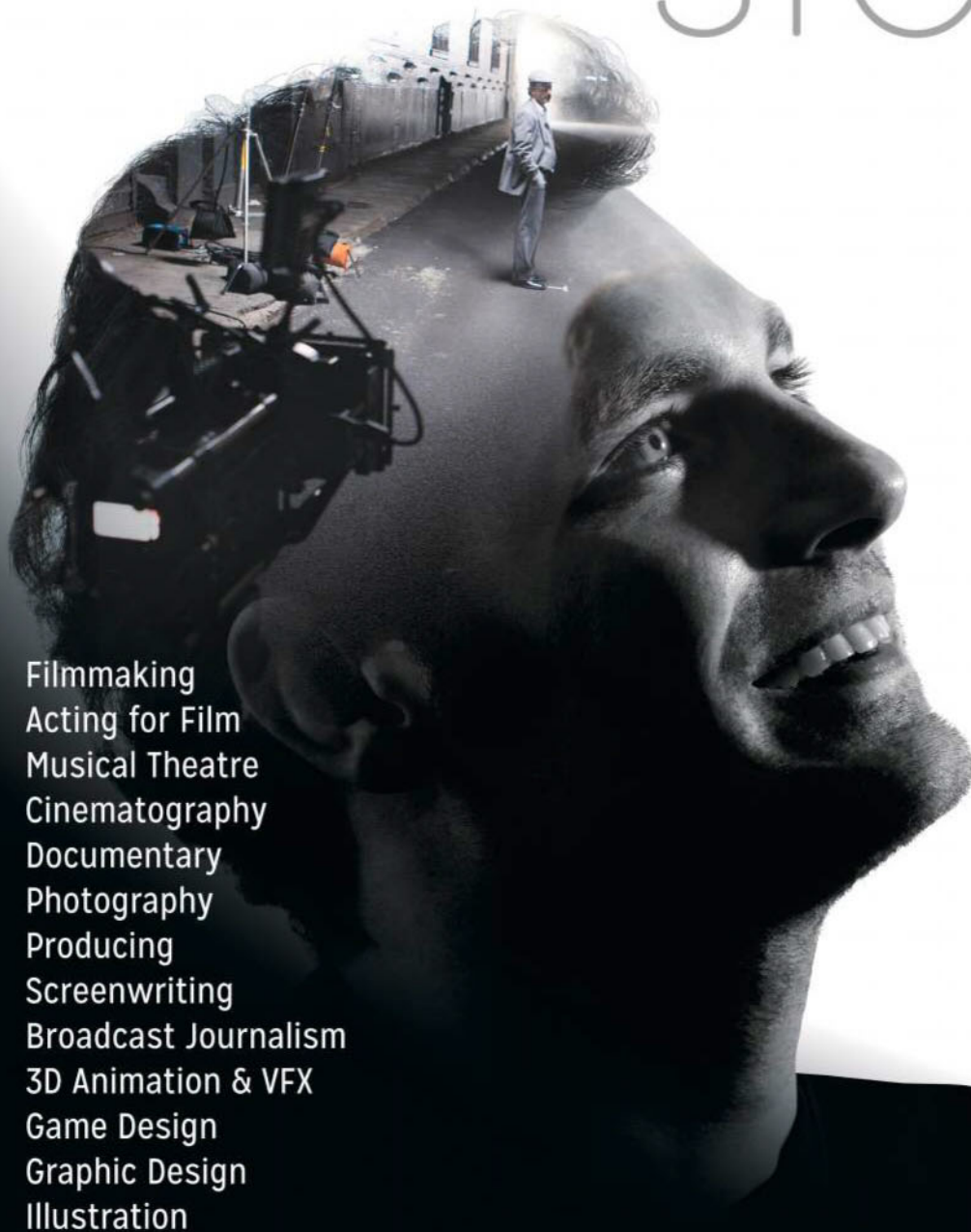
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12 Tron 13 Kill Bill 14 Escape from New York 15/16 The Dark Night Rises 17/18/19 Star Wars 20 Almost Famous 21 Big Trouble in Little China 22 Ghostbusters II 23 Tarantino Films  
24 Big Trouble in Little China 25 Close Encounters of the Third Kind 26 Raiders of the Lost Ark 27 Gremlins 28 The Thing 29 Green Room 30 Aliens 31 Inglourious Basterds 32 A Christmas Carol  
33 What We Do in the Shadows 34 The Blues Brothers 35 Reservoir Dogs 36 Big 37 Alien 38 Karate Kid 39 Shaun of the Dead 40 Kill Bill 41 Home Alone 42 Blade Runner 43 Robocop 44 Halloween 45 Gremlins  
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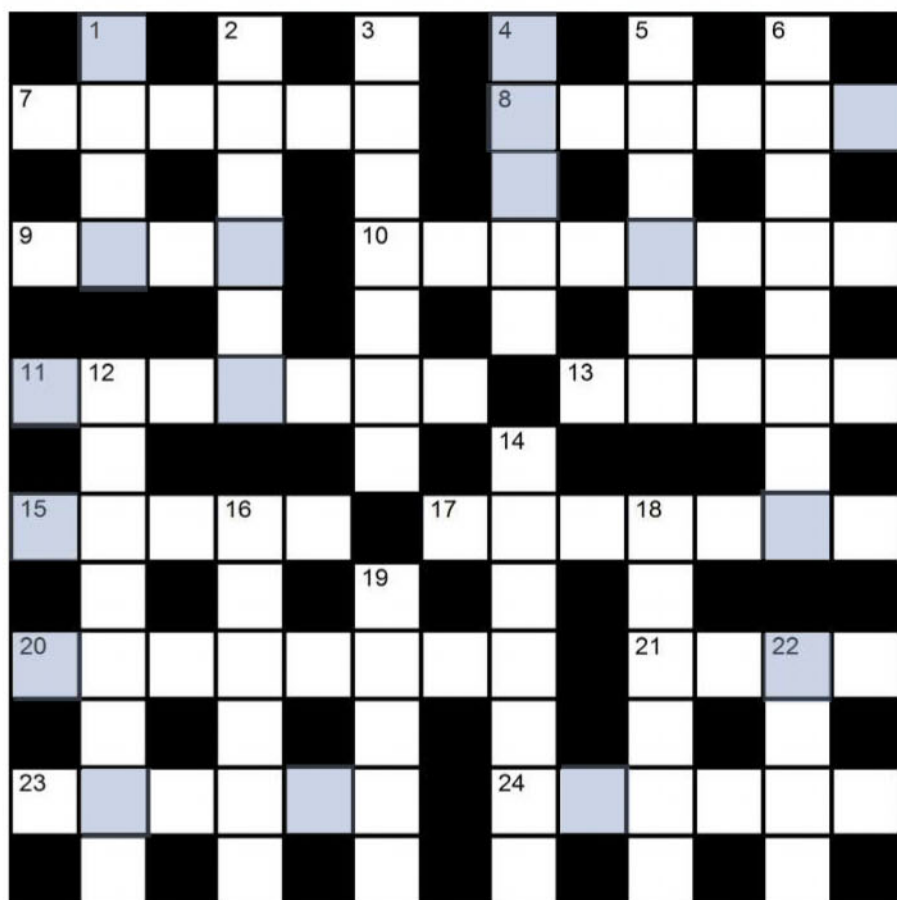
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- 7** Title character portrayed by both Sue Lyon (1962) and Dominique Swain (1997) (6)
- 8** Low-budget filmmaker once depicted by Johnny Depp (2,4)
- 9** Richard found among the endangered (4)
- 10** Roman, Best Director Oscar-winner for *The Pianist* (8)
- 11/13** Animated release that provided Seth Rogen with a meaty role (7,5)
- 15** Mia Wasikowska took her through the looking glass (5)
- 17** Benicio who was Franky Four Fingers in *Snatch* (3,4)
- 20** There were 12 in this Sidney Lumet courtroom classic (5,3)
- 21** A fish found amid the sea anemones (4)
- 23** French movie, directed by Jules Dassin, that sparked the heist genre (6)
- 24** Louise's co-driver in that '66 Thunderbird (6)

## DOWN

- 1 Could be Source, could be Da Vinci (4)
- 2 Sounds dotty, a film involving Adam Sandler and arcade games (6)
- 3 Pam Gear falls about to supply a mass-murder movie (7)
- 4 This period drama provided Gugu Mbatha-Raw with numerous awards (5)
- 5 Hotel managed by Don Cheadle in 2004 (6)
- 6 "The story of a wanna be who got to be" ran one tagline for this Mark Wahlberg-Jennifer Aniston get-together (4,4)
- 12 Louis Malle's Ocean-side city (8)
- 14 Branagh or maybe More (7)
- 16 Sissy Spacek's bucket of blood ordeal (6)
- 18 Mercies required for a Robert Duvall starrer (6)
- 19 Celia who twice resided at that Exotic Marigold Hotel (5)
- 22 Keep mum regarding this supernatural horror release starring Jessica Chastain (4)

**COMPETITION ENDS** 25 DECEMBER

**HOW TO ENTER** Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, 25 December. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

**DECEMBER ANSWERS ACROSS:** 1 Sleuth, 4 Grease, 9 Mandela, 10 Crash, 11 Naomi, 12 Okonedo, 13 Gemma Bovary, 18 Lucy Liu, 20 Limbo, 22 Robin, 23 Niagara, 24 Streep, 25 Strike. **DOWN:** 1 Simone, 2 Ennio, 3 The Firm, 5 Rocco, 6 Amateur, 7 Ephron, 8 Jason Bourne, 14 Escobar, 15 Valiant, 16 Clerks, 17 Mojave, 19 Lange, 21 Miami. **ANAGRAM HERMIONE GRANGER**

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# THE EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

THE WHITE RIBBON CHOSEN BY PETER STRICKLAND



"I'm surprised this scene hasn't been picked before," says Peter Strickland. "It encapsulates Michael Haneke's unflinching worldview in which the realities of mortality are devoid of any semblance of reassurance. It remains one of his most restrained, assured and brutal moments."

## INT. HOUSE — DAY

*Rudolf (Miljan Châtelain) and his sister Anna (Roxane Duran) are eating soup in silence. Earlier that day, Rudolf saw a dead woman for the first time.*

**RUDOLF:** The woman today, what was wrong with her?

**ANNA:** Which woman? I see. She was dead.

**RUDOLF:** What's that?

**ANNA:** What?

**RUDOLF:** Dead.

**ANNA:** What's "dead"? Quite a question! It's when one doesn't live anymore. When one has stopped living.

**RUDOLF:** When does one stop living?

**ANNA:** When one is very old, or very ill.

**RUDOLF:** And the woman?

**ANNA:** She had an accident.

**RUDOLF:** An "accident"?

**ANNA:** Yes. It's when you're badly hurt.

**RUDOLF:** Like Dad?

**ANNA:** Yes, but much worse than that. So bad, your body can't take it anymore.

**RUDOLF:** And then you're dead?

**ANNA:** Yes. But most people don't have an accident.

**RUDOLF:** So they're not dead.

**ANNA:** No, they die much later.

**RUDOLF:** When?

**ANNA:** Well... later, when they're really old.

**RUDOLF:** Does everyone die?

**ANNA:** Yes.

**RUDOLF:** Everyone, really?

**ANNA:** Yes, everyone has to die.

**RUDOLF:** But not you, Anni?

**ANNA:** Me too. Everyone.

**RUDOLF:** But not Dad?

**ANNA:** Dad too.

**RUDOLF:** Me too?

**ANNA:** You too. But not for a very long time. All of us, only in a very long time.

**RUDOLF:** One can't fight it? It has to happen?

**ANNA:** Yes, but not for a long time.

**RUDOLF:** And Mom? She didn't go on a trip? Is she dead too?

*Anna considers the question.*

**ANNA:** Yes. She's dead too. But that was a long time ago.

*Rudolf considers this for a moment. Then, in anger, he sweeps the bowl off the table.*



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as Richard Loving

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